

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

APRIL 1909.

LET ME ENJOY.¹

SONG: MINOR KEY.

I.

Let me enjoy the Earth no less
Because the all-enacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
Had other aims than my delight.

II.

About my path there flits a Fair
Who throws me not a word or sign;
I will find charm in her loth air,
And laud those lips not meant for mine.

III.

From manuscripts of tender song
Inspired by scenes and souls unknown,
I'll pour out raptures that belong
To others, as they were my own.

IV.

And some day hence, toward Paradise
And all its blest—if such should be—
I will cast glad, afar-off eyes,
Though it contain no place for me.

THOMAS HARDY.

¹ Copyright, 1909, by Thomas Hardy, in the United States of America.
VOL. XXVI.—NO. 154, N.S.

SOME IMPRESSIONS OF COQUELIN.

BY LADY BELL.

THOSE who are in real touch with some beloved art, even if they be only onlookers at it, must have known some of those heaven-sent, privileged moments in which they have not only seen the Best, but have instantly recognised it—and by that recognition have been armoured against the danger that lies in wait for us all, that of contentedly accepting the second-rate.

As far as the art of acting is concerned—and those who are not interested in that art need proceed no further with the following pages—there is no reason in these days why we should any of us yield to that deplorable acceptance. We have had, at intervals at any rate, the chance of being shown what acting can be at its highest: and those of us whose playgoing experiences coincide with the later decades of the nineteenth century have had the opportunity of seeing one of the greatest examples of all. The art of Coquelin at his best was a standard of acting, a point of comparison to those who saw him, for the rest of their lives. Art it was, there was no doubt: the conscious, highly finished, deliberate art of a man with the great French traditions of the stage behind him, an art which he had perfected through early years of determination and toil, and in the long years of unbounded success that followed. His extraordinary natural gifts were reinforced by consummate knowledge, by deliberate intention. He always had, and always gave, a sense, both on the stage and off, of the absolute certainty with which he handled his resources, never trusting to the inspiration of the moment, never at the mercy of an impulse or a mood. It was by his art he convinced the listener; it was not by simple native sincerity; but the result was the same.

Diderot's thesis, that the primary quality of an actor is that he should be able to stand outside his part, observe it dispassionately, and handle it with deliberate control, was an article of faith with Coquelin. He, too, believed that to feel real emotion on the stage was a fatal drawback to the actor; that the man who did so had

not
be l

The
he sh
shoul
for e
mom
warn
will
where
obser
he wi
exha
and w

All t
stag

I

in a
by h
hand
tears
throw
of th
this
dire
in or
Coqu
Then
for o
cue o
discu
the t
desira
dema

Co
friend
stage
'péro
round
every
by Co
which

not all his resources in hand, and did not know whither he might be led. As Diderot has it,

The actor should be a cool and calm spectator of human nature; in handling it he should have infinite fineness of perception, but no sentimentality—that is, he should have that art of imitating everything which will give him an equal aptitude for every kind of part. For if an actor surrenders himself to the emotion of the moment, it is impossible for him to play the same part ten times with the same warmth and the same success; fiery and convincing at the first performance, he will be played out and as cold as marble by the time he comes to the third: whereas, if remaining calm himself, his imitation of nature, founded on close observation, is deliberate and intentional. He will compose an imitation of which he will be absolutely certain, and by the tenth time he plays it, far from having exhausted his emotion, his acting will be strengthened by his experience of the part and will be more and more successful.

All this was constantly paraphrased in speech by Coquelin off the stage, and put into practice on it.

In support of this theory he would tell how on one occasion, in a performance of 'L'Ainé,' at the moment where he had to fall by his brother's bedside in floods of tears with his head in his hands, he was in reality overcome by emotion, and did subside into tears, to the great detriment of the scene. He was thereby entirely thrown off his balance and did not recover himself during the rest of the act. He would also relate the history of another mishap—this time, however, based upon no theory—that might have had dire results. In a play in which he had to feign a drunken sleep in order to overhear what two of the other characters were saying Coquelin actually did, being very tired, go to sleep for a moment. Then he woke with a start—mercifully in time!—but not sure for one instant of bewildered anxiety whether he had missed his cue or not. This incident, of course, is beside the mark in the discussion of Diderot's view, for even the most fanatic partisan of the theory 'qu'il faut jouer d'âme' would not contend that it is desirable to go really to sleep on the stage, even when the part demands it.

Coquelin was always ready to descant upon his theories. His friends and acquaintances will never forget how he would take the stage in a drawing-room as effectively as he did in the theatre, 'pérorant,' as he would himself have said, to the enthralled circle round him, and giving point and effect by his exquisite diction to every syllable that he uttered. Whatever the verbal missile used by Coquelin, it was handled and directed with an unerring skill which sent it straight home to the mark, a skill which made his

hearers realise how very little attention we pay in this country to diction and delivery in every-day speech, and how we mostly content ourselves with turning out a few mumbled words into the universe to shift for themselves with no adventitious aids to their effect. To hit the mark in talk, as in everything else, it is not only the missile which is necessary, but the way of directing it which is of importance; and the axiom that it is more effective to say the wrong words in the right way than the right words in the wrong way is true of conversation as well as of the stage.

Coquelin was extraordinarily interesting to watch on such occasions as he sat or stood in the midst of a circle, and talked, as the popular saying has it, as if he liked the sound of his own voice. Small wonder if he did, for there were few voices in the world like it, and it was a liking which was shared by his listeners. His appearance was familiar to most playgoers. A man of middle height, with no native nobility of aspect; with keen, rather small eyes; with overhanging eyebrows, of which he made unfailing and most effective use; abundant hair, which by a rapid touch he could make as expressive as the rest of his equipment; a thick, broad nose; a long upper lip; a mouth that shut tightly, with hard, determined lines in it. This was the appearance of the man who seemed to be by nature destined to play comedy parts. But this would not have satisfied him. He compelled his personality to assume not only comedy, but tragedy, sentiment, nobility. I would almost venture to say that a man of Coquelin's personality, given his supreme gift, would be more likely to aim at, and achieve, a wider range than one of more distinguished and romantic aspect. For the latter, although he might play low comedy parts as a 'tour de force,' would probably not be very anxious to identify himself with farce; while the man who could play the buffoon superbly would no doubt be desirous of achieving gallant and romantic parts as well.

Coquelin alone was able to play all parts, and did play them all. He could assume the flamboyant dignity of the swash-buckler, and the more discreet dignity of the hero who wears a frock-coat.

When 'Chamillac' was produced in London in 1887—in which he played a man of honour weighed down, dragged back by his former misdoings and finally making a confession of them—one of the newspaper critics said of him, and with truth, that Coquelin had 'draped himself in distinction as in a garment.'

In 'La Dame aux Camélias,' in which he played the small part of the father, making it stand out in the way that a great actor does make a small part stand out beyond the others, he played the scene in which the father persuades Marguerite to give up his son, with a reserve, a dignity, a rectitude which carried the scene and even made sympathetic the somewhat mean-spirited virtue of the father, a personage of whom Coquelin himself said 'Il joue un bien triste rôle, ce monsieur.'

Space forbids our even attempting to dwell on the numerous and more important parts in which Coquelin achieved brilliant success, whether in the classical pieces of the repertory or the large number of modern plays, of which the record is a testimony to his wide range and infinite variety of interpretation.

But there was no doubt—or so at least it seemed to the spectator—that it was not the black-coated parts that were the most congenial to him. He revelled in the swaggering transfiguration of costume, and his audience revelled with him as they looked on.

In 'Cyrano de Bergerac,' the every apotheosis of splendid swagger, he played as one whose soul was possessed by the spirit of the glorious and untranslatable 'Panache,' the glittering, the copious, the gallant, the absurd. He played 'Cyrano' all over the world, never failing in it, never falling flat. The inevitable danger of repeating a performance too many times is over-accentuation, apt to be still further intensified by playing to foreign audiences who may not understand the language of the actors. There is always a tendency, noticeable in actors on their return from foreign tours, towards trying unduly to eke out their meaning by exaggerated action and emphasis, and even Coquelin was not at times entirely free from it. But 'Cyrano' was a play that could afford to be accentuated, that could hardly be affected by over-emphasis. And the like impunity attended that other play, the immortal, which Coquelin had acted for still longer than 'Cyrano,' the play which Molière must surely have taught him himself, 'Les Précieuses Ridicules,' in which Coquelin's Mascarille stands unrivalled and unapproached in the interpretations of the stage. Here is swagger also, but of another kind: low-born, uproarious swagger with no note of distinction—real, rollicking buffoonery which will remain an indelible memory in the minds of those who were fortunate enough to see it. As one recalls it, one can still hear the sound of that rich, resonant voice before he came on to the stage at the beginning, crying 'la, la, la' to his

bearers as the sedan chair was carried in. One can see Mascarille seated between the two adoring ladies, and lying back in his chair, with his immense moustaches, his curls, his hat and feathers, his gay attire; one sees the superb air with which he displayed his clothes, the royal insolence with which he flung his scented glove under the nose of Polyxène, *alias* Madelon; his shameless joy in the jest, as he piled it up to see how much his companions would stand. This performance was the very summit of Coquelin's art, a performance which through all the years he had played it never grew stale, and which he played in London a year ago with the same inextinguishable 'verve' with which he had played it at the beginning. And here again his theories of the deliberate standing outside a part and building it up were justified: every word, every action of that part that looked so full of spontaneous uncontrolled hilarity was studied, calculated, certain; every word, every action was the same when he played it thirty years ago as it was when he played at the end.

At all times, whether in classical or modern plays, whether on the stage or off, Coquelin's gesticulation was most characteristic and instructive. In talk, he was curiously sparing of it, but when it came it was inimitably expressive. He used his hands with the rapid instinctive movements of the man to whom action is part of his natural means of expression, and whose gestures on the stage, therefore, are natural and convincing; different, indeed, from the acquired overlaid gestures used on the English stage by people to whom they are obviously artificial and uncustomary. The action of Coquelin's hands, and above all the play of his wonderful, mobile face, made the most trifling anecdote that he told a drama in miniature.

Those who saw him in 'Le Colonel Roquebrune,' which he was playing in Paris in 1897, will never forget one scene especially, in which, with absolutely no change of make-up, Coquelin managed by purely facial expression to achieve one of the most remarkable transitions ever seen on the stage. If my memory serves me, Colonel Roquebrune, a distinguished officer under Napoleon, is carousing in a tavern under an assumed name with some of the enemy in the character of a boon companion, whom he detains in talk until the time comes when he may reveal himself. When that moment came Coquelin, standing up calmly, said, 'Oui, Messieurs, je suis le Colonel Roquebrune'—and the whole aspect of the man altered. He was changed, he was someone else; the low lines

went out of his face, dignity and distinction came into it instead. It was a man of authority who stood there in the place of the reveller.

At other times he would transform his physiognomy suddenly with a twist of his hair or a clutch at his coat. One of the most effective things he ever did of this kind was in the second act of 'Les Surprises du Divorce' as the husband who, having divorced his wife because he could not bear her mother, a widow, finds when he is married again (to the daughter of a widower this time) that the said widow has married his new father-in-law. As this lady, for the second time an inmate of his home, walked into his drawing-room on one side of the stage, Coquelin coming in at the other stood transfixed, a picture of absolute helpless terror, his face livid, his hair actually on end. How was this achieved? One of the most acute critics of the English stage has recorded that this is one of the most remarkable instances of an actor having the possibility of turning pale at will!—on this occasion, however, the achievement was more sleight of hand than anything else. When Coquelin was subsequently asked how it was done, he said in reply, with a smile, that it was very simple. At the moment he comes on in that scene his face is not turned to the spectators, and their attention, besides, is directed to the mother-in-law, who dances in humming a song that the first wife used to sing—upon which Coquelin, having come in with his face already floured and painted and made up to represent extreme terror, suddenly turns round, facing the audience, with a cry of dismay, and as he does so throws up his hands, giving a rapid and imperceptible twist to his thick hair and making it stand upright. As he ended this explanation he said with a twinkle in his eye, 'Ce n'est pas plus malin que ça.'

It evidently amused him to talk of his calling, to answer the questions of people who had never been behind the curtain. He would describe, for instance, how when he sat down and had a meal on the stage everything on the table was so placed that in reaching it his action was visible; thus, when he was sitting at a square table, and was going to help himself to salt, the salt-cellar would be at the corner of the table furthest from him, so that when he helped himself the audience saw his right arm going across to the left-hand corner; in the same way a bottle that he would take with his left hand would be put on his right. And so on in regard to a mass of details, apparently unimportant, of which the spectators would be quite unconscious, but which produced an

extraordinary and convincing effect of completeness. 'Remember,' he would say when discussing either the staging or the construction of a play, 'that you must make it absolutely and absurdly clear what it is you wish to convey; and remember also that in order to produce the illusion of reality you have to behave on the stage in a manner which is unreal.' 'Le public,' he used to say with a gesture familiar to him, closing the forefinger and thumb of his right hand and accentuating with it what he said, 'Le public est un sot qui ne comprend pas à demi-mot.'

I remember hearing him upon one occasion complacently telling anecdotes of his presence of mind when some 'property' essential to the scene had been forgotten. In the 'Aiglon' he played the part of an old soldier of the Vieille Garde who brings secretly to the captive Duke of Reichstadt some toy soldiers painted to represent the Imperial army, tied up in a foulard. When he had come on to the stage to do this, he suddenly found that he had forgotten the foulard with the soldiers, which the whole of the next scene turned upon. He wheeled round to one of the subordinate characters, personating another soldier, who was standing behind him and improvised a scene with which he began scolding the man, pushing him back and telling him to get out of earshot—and as he pushed him backwards, the audience not distinguishing what he was saying, he was muttering more and more furiously the whole time, 'Je n'ai pas mon foulard! Je n'ai pas mon foulard!'—until finally he got him out of the door, and with interjected ejaculations filled in the time until the man, having understood, reappeared with the foulard. Then he let him come half-way down with it and took it from him quietly, so that no one noticed what had happened. On another occasion he was playing in a modern comedy, in which he had to pay a call. While waiting in the drawing-room for the hostess to come, he suddenly found he had forgotten the book which he was supposed to be bringing back to her, and on which two pages of dialogue turned. So he cried out, 'I won't wait any longer!' and burst out through the folding doors at the back, leaving the stage vacant, to burst in through them again in another minute—the book safe in his pocket—saying, 'Eh bien, non je reste!'—'Oh, yes,' he would say with a satisfied air when recounting these stories, 'it is very difficult to trip me up on the stage, I can tell you.' Someone once asked him which of the words 'Côté cour' (the left of the actor) and 'Côté jardin' (the right) meant the right side of the stage, and which the

left. He professed to have forgotten. 'Tout ce que je puis vous dire,' he added with a fatuous smile, 'c'est que le côté où j'entre, moi, c'est toujours le bon côté.'

In the summer of 1908 he was the guest of the Stage Society at a dinner given by them in London. For many of the diners it was the last time they saw him, and it was Coquelin, under one aspect, at his best. Those who were present will not easily forget the moment when after a good deal of the variegated after-dinner oratory from one person and another, more or less effective, that characterises such occasions, Coquelin finally rose, amid thunders of applause, to reply. He stood there, grave, pale, quiet, holding a paper, from which he was going to read his speech, in his hand. And then, in the dead silence that followed, the measured, well-balanced sentences fell with perfection of enunciation and effect, as he besought his hearers, members of what he considered a dangerously innovating dramatic society, to pause and see whither they were going.

'I find myself in a difficult position to-night,' he said. 'I cannot pretend that I am in sympathy with the path you are attempting to tread. . . . Je suis de la vieille garde, moi, je suis un vieux classique. . . . Croyez-moi, Messieurs et Mesdames, vous faites fausse route. . . . I belong,' he went on, 'to those who believe in the traditions of the stage, and in its illusions. I do not believe in dragging to the light the sordid ugliness of these days and in depressing the hearer and sending him away miserable, nor in representing details fit only for the consulting-room. Ce n'est pas du théâtre que vous faites là,' he said; 'c'est de la clinique.'

And many of his hearers agreed with him. He always kept absolutely aloof from the view which some of us hold with such passionate conviction in these days, that the stage is the place of all others to teach from, and should be so used by those who wish to teach as well as to divert. It is the eternal story book, the eternal picture book that can bring home to the hearer and to the spectator, with a force nothing else can equal, truths which can be impressed on them so vividly in no other way. To hear that view put forth roused Coquelin to the very keenest opposition. 'No, no,' he would cry, 'let us have poetry on the stage, let us have illusion, above all let us have beauty; let the charm of the theatre lift us into another world.' This does not mean that he was not ready to play dramas of modern life, but that they must have some romantic or sentimental pivot, some possible nobility of interpretation. The last play that most of us in England saw him in was the very last word of the conventional drama of the past, Sardou's 'L'Affaire des Poisons.' It was a positive relief to the

spectator, after seeing so many plays about slums and strikes, to enter into the gorgeous society assembled round Louis of France, to see him surrounded by resplendent nobles, by fine ladies sitting on tabourets, by obsequious courtiers ; to see walking about in his palace people bearing the great familiar names of the seventeenth century, to see high-born conspirators lurking behind marble pillars, and wicked duchesses trying to poison royal personages—and through it all Coquelin, the virtuous abbé, discovering everything, daring everything, threatened, captured, but always coming up smiling, and finally by sheer force of virtue discomfiting all his adversaries.

What a strange gallant world was this which he showed us for the last time, and how bravely he bore himself in it ! With that memory we may well be content.

We shall never know what his interpretation would have been of the extraordinary character-part he was going to try next, Chantecler, the Gallic cock.—He was delighted, it seems, with the old French word *coquelinier*, meaning the crowing of the cock.—The rehearsals of 'Chantecler,' of the rest of the company, that is to say, studying their parts without him, had already begun. As Rostand described it, in a fine and moving image, when he stood by Coquelin's grave, the rehearsals begun had been conducted ' *toujours autour d'une place vide*, ' the empty space in which the chief actor would shortly stand—'and now,' he went on, 'that place will be empty for ever. Our rehearsals, our performances must always go on with that void in our midst.'

Yes, there is no doubt of it, Coquelin's place will always remain empty—the place held by the last of the classics, by the man who joined the great art of the past to the great art of the present. It will never be filled again.

THE PALADIN.¹

AS BEHELD BY A WOMAN OF TEMPERAMENT.

BY HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PALADIN'S QUEST.

Two years later our paladin returned to his native land to enjoy a few months' leave before his translation to another sphere, or rather hemisphere, of masterly inactivity. He had been appointed First Secretary at Buenos Ayres.

Lady Matilda, with her tender hand straying amongst his curls, rejoiced because the dear boy had changed so little; but he told her that he was conscious of change within. To her dismay he refused to sleep in Pont Street, although he promised on his honour to lunch there frequently. He took rooms in a snug by-street near Pall Mall and the clubs, to one of the more exclusive of which he had been elected a member.

Three days after his arrival in England he made a discovery which moved him profoundly: *Sabrina et Cie.* had been swept from the Post Office Directory. A complaisant fishmonger furnished crumbs of information. One of the ladies was dead, and the other had been sold up—lock, stock, and barrel. The reason? Harry asked the question fiercely. Bad debts! Thousands of pounds that couldn't be collected from the swells! Miss Yorke—that was the young lady's name—had certainly 'gone it a bit.' She'd supplied all the hats—a hundred at least—in that big production at the Calliope Theatre, which came to grief in less than a month. Harry sped to Pont Street, presenting his question as if it were a pistol.

'Where is Esther?'

¹ Copyright, 1909, by H. A. Vachell, in the United States of America.

'What Esther?'

'Good heavens! Esther Yorke!'

'My dear, I've not seen her for an age.'

'She's been sold up. Did you know it? You *did*? And not a word to me?'

'I thought it would pain you.'

'Did none of you stand by her?'

'I was at Homburg at the time. I bought hats from her, although her charges—to an old friend—were certainly excessive.'

'Did Dorothea drop her?'

'I have always understood she dropped Dorothea.'

'I must find her.'

'My son, is that wise?'

The paladin raised his voice to the author of his being.

'I loved her. You know that. I wanted to marry her, although I was torn in two, because I'd promised you to do nothing rash. She hinted with that odd little smile of hers that I'd marked time too long. I told her you'd come round; and she said you'd been round already.'

Lady Matilda was frightened, but she stuck to her guns, and fired the biggest of them.

'What Captain Saladin hinted was true. Douglas Yorke never married the mother. She died abroad. Esther behaved very well; and we did stand by her. We made her little hat shop the fashion. Ask Mrs. Rockingham Trigg. Dear Constance Malplaquet was always buying hats.'

'Did Lady Malplaquet pay for them?'

'I suppose so. You are adopting a tone towards me, dear Harry, which hurts me very much.'

She gazed at him yearningly, with tears trickling down her cheeks. Harry was touched.

'I beg your pardon,' he said contritely. 'I dare say she's all right. A dear little girl like that couldn't come to grief. And I ought to have written. But she twitted me once with not carrying out my threats. I put it plainly to her: the last word. Would she chuck me—or the stage? I lost a stone over the job. She refused to marry me five times, and yet she cared. I'll swear she cared, the witch. Five times! It nearly killed me.'

'My poor darling!'

'If I hear anything, I'll let you know.'

'You are not going before luncheon. I'd ordered the *mousse* you like especially for you.'

'You're the best mother in the world.'

He stayed to luncheon and commended the *mousse*.

After luncheon the quest began. Harry came of a foxhunting race, and in the field he rode hard and straight, as his father had ridden before he began to feel the effect of intemperance in all things. Moreover, Camber Castle, as we know, is in the Quorn country, where there is no pottering, no 'craning' at 'hairy' fences, no crawling through woodlands. Harry spoke contemptuously of provincial packs. He hunted Esther in the same spirit with which he settled down in his saddle for a quick thing behind the fastest hounds in the kingdom. But there was no scent beyond the fishmonger's shop. Sabrina was dead, and the *Cie*. had disappeared, engulfed amongst six millions.

When this became certain Harry asked himself a pertinent question: 'Shall I go on?' Being an official, he did not question the possibility of finding Esther ultimately. But would it be the sweet alluring creature whom he had known and loved? As a man of the world, he told himself that she, the dimpled nymph, had disappeared for ever. The bloom must have been rubbed off long ago. He had warned her; and in the teeth of his warning she had rushed off to visit Henry FitzRoy.

The name inspired a happy thought. The one and only might know something about her. FitzRoy received him courteously. Yes, he remembered Miss Yorke quite well. He had advised her to try anything except the stage. And he had written a letter of introduction to Johnson, and given the young lady a card for Miranda Jagg.

Next day our paladin presented himself at Miss Jagg's Dramatic School, and asked for a private interview. Miranda did not impress him favourably, but it must be remembered that Harry had never seen her act, or teaching others to act. He perceived an old woman, lamentably untidy, wearing a dressing-gown at four in the afternoon and carpet slippers! Her fingers were stained by nicotine; her grey hair was tousled; obviously she had abandoned the wearing of stays! Harry put his first question—

'I am searching for Miss Esther Yorke. Do you know where she is?'

'I do not. I wish I did. She was a great friend of mine.'

Harry winced, but he realised that he had been right. Oh,

these mummers ! This fat old woman the friend of his own girl !!! But, having gone so far, he was the last man to draw back. Not quite hiding his disgust—for Miranda had a keen though slightly congested eye—he entreated details. Miranda stared at him ; then she picked up his card, which lay, alas ! on the floor amongst such loose company as cigarette ends.

‘ Good gracious ! Are you Harry ? ’

Mr. Rye admitted, rather stiffly, that his Christian name was Henry.

‘ Once I asked her if there was a Jack, and she said there had been a Harry. You are he ? ’

He bowed, unable to speak.

‘ Sit down ! Smoke, if you like. Mr. Rye, if you ever cared for her, I’m your friend. But where on earth have *you* been all this time ? ’

‘ At The Hague. I’m in the Diplomatic Service. ’

‘ I see. ’ Her beady eyes twinkled. She saw everything, and understood. It speaks volumes for her intelligence when we add that she became sorry for Harry, and overlooked, then and thereafter, the surface fault of superciliousness. And, of course, he was very handsome, unmistakably a swell. She comprehended in a flash what had once puzzled her : Esther’s indifference to the young gentlemen of the star class.

‘ If you cared for her, and if she cared for you—and I suppose she did—eh ? — ’

Harry inclined his curly head.

‘ — what separated you ? ’

‘ I asked her to marry me five times, Miss Jagg. I did indeed. ’

His superciliousness dropped from him. The sympathy in Miranda’s face and in her incomparable voice was irresistible.

‘ How could she refuse you ? ’

He smiled modestly, acknowledging the compliment. It was comforting to reflect that others beside himself were astounded at Esther’s uncompromising ‘ No. ’ He found himself accepting one of Miranda’s cigarettes and lighting his and hers at the same match. With their heads close together he added : ‘ I was poor, and my—er—people got at her. She said she would marry me when she had earned her own living. She was a bit—obstinate, you know. ’

‘ Right you are ! Obstinate as a little mule. ’

What has become of her ? ’

Miranda sighed ; the fingers that held the cigarette trembled.

'Sabrina Lovell, her partner, asked me to keep an eye on her. But I'm a fat old woman, as you see. She ran away from me. I couldn't keep up. I tried, Mr. Rye—I did, on my word.'

'I'm sure you did,' he said in his pleasant voice.

'After Sabrina's death she went it. You've explained things. She wanted to make money to marry you. That's quite plain—now.'

She glanced at Harry maternally, and he told himself that Miranda was the most understanding person he had ever met.

'The poor little dear couldn't stand alone. Sabrina predicted it. A small success turned her head. Then the pendulum swung t'other way. I tried to put a spoke into her wheel. Useless! She was her father's daughter. She sold everything—her pretty furniture, her trinkets, her furs—to keep that shop open ; but bad debts swamped her. Then——'

'Yes ?'

'She gave up her rooms in Bloomsbury. She lived with me for a bit. I got her an engagement to go on tour. The company bust up. She found herself stranded in Bristol without a farthing.'

'Good heavens!'

'I sent her enough money to get back to me ; she wrote a letter ; you shall see it.'

She crossed the big room, unlocked a desk, and took from it a letter. Harry saw that it was written upon cheap paper and with purple ink. And he perceived also that Esther's handwriting had changed, not for the better. He read it, biting his lips.

YOU DARLING OLD THING,—I accept your money, but I won't come back to live on you. I shall turn up with your money in my hand, and then I shall tell you what I think of you. What is in my box is worth five pounds.

ESTHER.

'I have a box of hers full of clothes, but she never turned up,' said Miranda with a gulp. 'I advertised. I did what I could. I was very fond of her, Mr. Rye.'

'Perhaps she is dead ?'

The starch was out of the fine gentleman. His eyes were wet ; and when Miranda saw that, she took his hand in hers and patted it.

'I am sure she isn't,' she whispered.

'What reason have you for saying that ?'

'I'm a superstitious old fool—always was. Don't laugh at

me! I knew that Sabrina Lovell would die. One can't explain these things. And I know that Esther is alive.'

He groaned out: 'It might be better if she were dead.'

'She is not dead; but if she ever comes for her box she will have five pounds in her hand.'

He went away dazed.

Nor did he recover quickly, although his mother poured oil and wine (the best in her cellar) into his wounds. She saw that he gazed at her with reproach in his blue eyes. Esther's name was never mentioned. Lady Matilda knew that she had disappeared, and in her heart of hearts she may have hoped that the girl was dead. Dead or alive she stood between her boy and marriageable maidens of the right sort, whom he regarded with cold eyes. To maidens of the wrong sort he was said to be less indifferent. He was seen supping at the Savoy with Alice Godolphin, the mimic and dancer. Everybody knew that the lovely Alice was a good girl, but she was not the wife for a future Ambassador. The anxious mother was told that her Harry drank more champagne than is considered necessary to slake an ordinary thirst. He began to lose his attractive youthfulness; his skin became red instead of pink, his eyes less clear.

Was he altogether his father's son? Would he end like him?

Then the unforeseen happened. Harry had employed a private detective to search for Esther. It was the right thing to do, and therefore he did it. Nor did he shrink from possibilities. In his own mind—and conscience—honour compelled him to hunt diligently, not for a wife, but for the woman who might have been his wife. If she had fallen to the depths, he would play his part as becomes an English gentleman. She presented a tremendous claim upon his consideration and his purse, because she was the girl he had loved. This thought was a real solace to him. Always he saw two Esthers: the sacrosanct maid who had made a hero of him, and the headstrong girl who had made that same hero feel uncommonly like an ass. Against the second Esther he bore a grudge. The grudge might be burnt out by heaping coals of fire upon a head once held too high and at the end brought low.

The detective wired to his employer that Esther Yorke was found. The telegram ended with a somewhat peremptory phrase: 'Meet me to-night, Black Swan, Southampton.'

That night Harry was pledged to attend a gala performance at the Opera. Nevertheless he travelled to Southampton, trying

in va
shoul
curtly
'I
'I
'I
'C
A
had e
unerr
but n
dead
'Com
is the
'S
Th
Th
a due
Legat
Peace
phras
althou
to be
the p
partic
of wa
discus
Secret
room.
to Lo
money
it nev
horror
He
street
the de
'I
'I
H
to be
In the
vo

in vain to analyse his emotions, unable to determine what he should say or do when Esther and he met. The detective reported curtly—

‘I found her ill, almost starving.’

‘Did you mention my name?’

‘I had no such instructions.’

‘Quite right. How did you find her?’

A memorandum book was produced. Certainly the detective had earned a handsome cheque. He had begun at Bristol. With unerring skill and patience he had hunted through town after town, but never losing faith in his ability to run his quarry to ground, dead or alive. When all the details were given, Harry said: ‘Come back in half an hour. No chance of—of losing her again, is there?’

‘She can hardly walk, poor thing!’

The ‘poor thing’ in the mouth of a paid servant hurt horribly.

The half-hour that succeeded was memorable, inasmuch as a duel was fought between a paladin and a First Secretary of Legation. Our diplomatists are very carefully trained nowadays. Peace with honour—that immortal phrase coined by the greatest phrasemaker of his generation—has become slightly shop-worn, although still admittedly serviceable, and honour is not lightly to be defined. Fortunately, everybody knows what peace is; and the peace-at-any-price school enjoys an increasing popularity, particularly with those who have something to lose. The horrors of war have not been, and never can be, exaggerated. With this discussion, let us return to our paladin victorious over the First Secretary. Peace without honour slunk from the best inn’s best room. The First Secretary had been sorely tempted to return to London by the next train, leaving the detective with sufficient money to secure a poor thing from possibility of starvation. Let it never be forgotten that our Harry stayed, well knowing that horrors might confront him.

He went alone to Esther’s lodging—a mean house in a mean street. A dreadful woman, leering, bleary-eyed, gin-sodden, opened the door. Harry entered.

‘I want to speak to you alone,’ he said.

‘Right! You’re the gent as sent the ’tec?’

He followed her into a room, the more terrible because it seemed to be making some dying, convulsive attempt to appear respectable. In the window hung a card: *Apartments.*

'You are Mrs. Plant?'

'Yus, I'm Mrs. Plant. There's nothink agen me, neither. If lodgers would pay up, I might be askin' yer to sit down in a better chair than that.'

'Miss Yorke owes you money?'

'Two pun seventeen.'

'Here are three sovereigns. Can I see her?'

'Why not? Walk up! Second floor back. She was a-sittin' by the winder. She'll go to bed early, because light comes expensive.' Harry shuddered.

'Perhaps she will see me here?'

'I dessay. What nyme?'

He hesitated. Suppose she refused to see him? Or if—he paled at the possibility—the mere mention of his name and his presence in such a house drove her to take that avenue of escape which led through the open window.

'I'll go up,' he said. Upon the threshold of the room he turned and put the last question hoarsely:

'What has she been doing to earn a living?'

'Sewin', chiefly—not much o' that. She had a job in one of the big shops. They sacked 'er when 'er 'ealth broke down, poor thing!'

Again that hateful epithet, and this time in the mouth of a drunkard!

Outside her door he hesitated again, but not for long. He pulled himself together, squaring his broad shoulders as he tapped on the rickety panel.

'Come in.'

The voice had not changed. He would have recognised it anywhere by reason of its fine quality, but it was attenuated in sound. He opened the door.

'Harry!'

She tottered towards him—a wraith, so thin, so pale, so wretchedly clad that he exclaimed 'O God!'

'How did you find me? Why have you come?'

'To take care of you,' he answered thickly. He had forgotten that these were the words he had used before; but the woman remembered. Was it possible that he had remained faithful? With a low cry she fell into his arms and fainted. He laid her on the pallet which served as sofa and bed. He put his ear to her bosom. Was she dead?

A doctor was summoned to answer the question.

Within twenty-four hours she was installed in comfortable rooms overlooking the sea, and a trained nurse was in attendance. There seemed to be a possibility that she might lose her reason, for she remained, apparently, unconscious of the change in her condition, babbling incoherent phrases, bits of poetry which she had learned as a child, and lines out of parts she had played when on tour. Harry sat beside her, called her by name, took her hand; but she stared at him vacantly. When he said 'Esther, don't you know me? I'm Harry,' she would reply: 'Poor Harry! I was fond of Harry once.'

Why did she pity—*him*? He understood plainly enough that the adjective qualified the Harry she had known, not the First Secretary of Legation.

The landlady of the lodgings by the sea, the nurse, and the doctor knew him as Mr. Browne. Asked suddenly for a name, he had, on an impulse, given a false one. The landlady may have suspected this; but his insistence on the final 'e' put to flight unworthy suspicions. A ready wit is almost as good as ready money. And the lodgings were paid for in advance. Then he returned to town.

It is significant that he did not communicate with Miranda. The disposition to mark time had become a habit with him. As a diplomat he had learned to put off till to-morrow what need not be done to-day.

At the end of a fortnight the doctor said, when Harry ran down from London to see Esther:

'Have you noticed the change in her looks?'

'Yes.'

'She drinks milk like a baby, quarts of it. The body has responded to my treatment, but the mind is less amenable. How pretty she is!'

'Yes,' said Harry.

'If I were you, I should take her abroad. Preferably, to France. A complete change may work wonders and can do no harm.'

'I'll think it over.'

'It's so easy; the boat for Havre leaves every night at twelve.'

The suggestion ripened in his mind. In France no awkward questions were asked. He would be able to devote himself to the task of nursing Esther without encountering raised eyebrows

and sly smiles. Already he excited curiosity. At any moment he might meet a friend when he was walking beside Esther's bath-chair, for this gentle form of exercise had been prescribed.

Esther had come to recognise him as a faithful attendant. She called him Mr. Browne, withholding the familiar Harry. She had the same smile for him, for the doctor, and for the nurse.

'How kind you all are!' she said.

He had kissed her hand, lying thin and passive in his own. She made no attempt to withdraw it. Had he kissed her lips, she would have smiled and said 'Thank you.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE PLEASANT LAND OF FRANCE.

FURTIVELY—one dislikes to use such a word, but the truth must be told—our paladin slipped over to France and made a reconnaissance. By the luck of things he found a charming chalet overlooking the Seine, not far from Rouen, where he consulted a doctor, who expressed lively interest in the case, and promised to secure a nurse. His English *confrère* had great right! Complete change of scene was to be commended. When would Madame arrive? Our paladin blushed, explaining that Madame was Mademoiselle; he thought he detected a twinkle in the doctor's eye.

'I regard her as my sister,' he said austerely.

'Perfectly,' said the doctor with equal sobriety.

'She was to have been my wife, Monsieur le docteur.' The Frenchman bowed profoundly. 'I tell you this in confidence. She is ill and friendless. I have come to your charming country because in England my motives are likely to be misunderstood.'

The doctor bowed again. Might he be allowed to compliment Monsieur upon his accent and his admirable powers of expression? Also Monsieur was a man of heart.

Our Harry unbent. He did speak French very well, and this little doctor was as understanding a person as Miranda Jagg.

A man of heart!

The phrase warmed him to the core. He had given up first-class cricket, although he wore the Zingari riband round his panama

hat. Yes—he had a heart and—and—*viscera*!! The world, his world, would laugh if they could see him playing nurse to a waif who had lost everything, including her memory; but this little Frenchman understood and bowed. It may have occurred to him that gentlemen of like kidney had fought at Crécy and Agincourt. From such foes one might accept defeat without a sense of humiliation. At the moment, too, the Channel Squadron was being entertained at Brest. The *entente cordiale* had been established.

He took the chalet overlooking the Seine, engaged a couple of stout, rosy-cheeked Norman girls, added a few articles of furniture, and returned to Southampton.

Esther's mental condition remained the same, but the terrible lines were fading out of her face. She greeted Mr. Browne with sweet effusion; evidently she had missed him. Alone with her, he whispered his plans. She clapped hands like a child.

'France! How lovely! How kind you are, Mr. Browne!'

'I wish you would call me Harry, dear.'

She regarded him seriously, a puzzled light in her hazel eyes.

'Oh, I couldn't. I knew a Harry. Poor fellow! I couldn't call anybody else Harry. You mustn't ask me.'

'You would like to come to France with me?'

'I should simply love it.'

Her hand slipped into his.

The journey was accomplished easily. The English nurse accompanied her patient as far as Havre, where she was met by the French nurse and doctor. That evening they reached the chalet. It was called Mont Plaisir. And it had a history. A French artist had built it for the woman he loved. And here man and wife had lived tranquilly and happily for some three years, during which time the man's best work had been accomplished. Then fame and fortune lured him to Paris; and from that moment the fickle goddesses turned their backs on him. The poor fellow lost wife and health, and all appetite for work. The little doctor, who told the tale to our paladin, had seen him in Montmartre sipping absinthe, a scarecrow, haggard, ragged, indifferent to present or future, for ever gazing, with lack-lustre eyes, into the mists of the past!

The garden which encompassed the chalet was charming. Roses in wildest profusion bordered a terrace. A big chestnut tree overshadowed a small lawn. Beyond was an orchard with its

crop of apples yet ungathered. In the early morning and evening one could smell the apples. From the terrace the ground, broken by moss-covered rocks, sloped sharply to the river. And of course there was a fountain, a miniature affair, but made of fine stone delicately carved: a *trouvaille* of the artist, who had found it in the courtyard of some ruined Renaissance château. From the mouth of Time, a bearded sage who supported a sun-dial, spouted a jet of clearest water, the bubbling moments of life tinkling melodiously as they splashed into the basin beneath, and overflowing in a tiny rivulet which trickled through the rocks to the river, and thence to the sea.

Esther's delight in the cottage, the fountain, the view of the river, the spires of Rouen, in the rosy-cheeked handmaidens, was pleasant to behold. She slept like a baby. Our Harry slept well also, wondering, as he laid his curly head upon his pillow, how many men of his upbringing would have risen adequately to such an occasion.

We pass over two sunny weeks. Lady Matilda knew that her boy was abroad, and that letters addressed *Poste Restante*, Rouen, would reach him. When he disappeared from London, she wondered whether Miss Alice Godolphin would continue dancing at the *Terpsichore Theatre*. She did. She danced every night of the month that Harry was in France. Balm this, to a fond and anxious mamma!

At the end of the fortnight Esther had become the counterfeited presentment of his own girl, whom he had never expected to see again in the flesh. And in a subtle, inexplicable way our paladin was sensible that he had regained his youth. The simple life agreed with him vastly well. Except when engaged in field sports, he had always been of a slightly indolent disposition. He liked to take things easy. The Hague, dear sleepy town, suited him. Buenos Ayres, the land of *mañana*, would suit him even better, if his Chief were the right sort.

He read aloud to Esther; he spent hours with her upon the river; no brother could have been more devoted to a sister.

She called him 'Brownie.'

But he never looked at her without reflecting that he had found her in a slum. Four years of her life were a sealed book! That she had lost reason at sight of him was a fact pregnant with horror. In her hollowed cheeks, before they were filled out by the good Normandy fare, he visualised nightmare imaginings.

The little doctor began to shake his head. Mademoiselle might not find her memory. He cited cases. To all intents and purposes the Bon Dieu had assigned a new lease of life without reference to the old one. Certainly, she was of the most reasonable. It would be idiotic, impertinent, to describe her as insane. Physiologists would say that Mademoiselle exhibited an interesting illustration of double consciousness with a complete break between the past and the present.

With a bitter-sweet shock, our Harry realised that he had become an object of supreme interest to her. In his absence the nurse remarked that she seemed unhappy and irritable. With him, alone or in company, she was as gay and joyous as a child. Half of his leave had expired; in three months he must set sail for the Argentine. What then?

One day he spoke of Miranda, of Sabrina, of her life in Palace Gardens. She listened attentively, with a puzzled, piteous expression.

'You make my head ache,' she said, and burst into tears.

He kissed away the tears, soothing her gently. Was this taking advantage of a helpless girl? By no means. She was his dear little sister; she expected brotherly kisses from Brownie, and she received them.

To describe our paladin as gently stewing in his own juice is, perhaps, a vulgar metaphor, but it expresses the condition of affairs. Harry simmered, sometimes with satisfaction, often with apprehension; and Miranda—had she been in the kitchen—would have exclaimed: 'Here's a pretty kettle of fish!'

It is too painful to speculate upon what would have happened had Esther not recovered her memory, which came back, as it had gone, quite suddenly and from the same cause: a shock. Harry and she were drifting down the river, when a boat ran into them, bow on, striking them amidships. Harry dragged an insensible woman to the bank. For the second time he thought she was dead: animation seemed to be suspended. She struggled back to life in her pretty room at the cottage, and opened her eyes to recognise Harry.

'Where am I?' she asked feebly.

'I'm taking care of you,' he answered eagerly. 'Don't worry.'

'But I can't understand——'

'You mustn't try to understand yet. Lie quiet! You have been ill.'

'She stared at him with dilating pupils. Then she saw her own hand, and gasped out :

'Harry, that is not my hand.'

'Of course it is.'

'How funny! It's the hand I used to have.'

He remembered the hands outstretched towards him in that mean lodging. They were claw-like, with needle-marks upon them.

'Esther, you've been ill for weeks, and now you're well. But, for Heaven's sake, keep quiet!'

The doctor administered morphia, and she slept for nearly twelve hours, while our paladin wondered what he should say to her when she woke up.

When they met, next day, his task was not made any the easier by the discovery that she had not the slightest remembrance of anything which had taken place since her first seizure, while everything preceding it had become perfectly clear.

He explained, with admirable modesty, what he had done. She listened, the colour ebbing and flowing in her cheeks. Surprise feebly expresses her emotions. She was astounded and confounded, for she had seen herself in the glass before she joined him in the garden, and the nurse, you may be sure, had prattled enthusiastically of Monsieur's devotion and patience. Indeed, the doctor and she—romantic souls, both—had exchanged a word or two. Monsieur would marry his so sweet young Mees! What a story! What an ending, O mon Dieu!

They sat side by side on the little rose-embowered terrace overlooking the Seine. The sun shone delicately through a lavender-grey haze: upon the water-meadow below a row of poplars cast translucent shadows where the cows were lying down: the river reflected the mother-of-pearl tints of the sky.

'Does anybody know?' she asked.

'Not a soul. I thought of telling Miranda Jagg. Perhaps I ought to have done so. But I felt that even she might misapprehend my motives. And so I—well, I marked time.'

The old expression struck her. She looked at him more critically.

'Harry, why have you done all this for me?'

'Why? My dear girl, what a question!'

'A very natural one, I think.'

'What sort of man do you suppose I am? I came back from

The Hague to find you vanished. I simply had to find the woman I had asked to become my wife.'

'I see,' she said quietly.

'There is a fairly decent inn near here. I shall put up there till, till other arrangements can be made.'

'Why should you go?'

'I have been taking care of a young child, not a young woman.'

To cover an awkward moment he picked a rose, and fastened it into her dress.

'You bought me clothes?'

'The English nurse attended to that. Not a bad sort, but a gossip. The doctor suggested my bringing you here.'

'You are wonderful!'

She tried to compute her debt to him, and failed. How could she repay him?

'We shall have *déjeuner* together, out here, under the chestnut tree, as usual.'

'As usual?'

'We have always breakfasted and dined under that tree.'

She passed the hand he had given back to her across her forehead.

'It is a dream, Harry, a dream. And I remembered nothing?'

'Nothing. You were a jolly little kid. We had great larks together.'

'I almost wish I had not woke up.'

'Esther,' he said in a low voice, 'you are not strong yet. Please let things go on for a bit just as they are. You will do this, dear, won't you?'

She answered 'Yes,' with a tender sparkle in her eyes.

He noticed then and afterwards that her instant acceptance was meek. The burden of poverty, of a compulsory dependence upon others, the habit of obedience ground into her when she was a shop-girl—these had crushed her spirit. She looked at Harry with a piteous little smile upon her face, slightly deprecating, slightly derisive, which seemed to say: 'Your word is law. Who am I, now, that I should impose my wishes or desires upon anybody?'

Argentine, one of the rosy-cheeked girls, came out to lay the cloth for the mid-day meal. She brought long crisp rolls, golden butter, and cyder in glass decanters. From the kitchen, hard by, was wafted the fragrance of a cunningly compounded *ragoût*.

'How hungry I am!' said Esther. Then she added seriously: 'And for six months I have not had a decent meal that I can remember.'

Argentine beamed as she handed the omelette to the *beau* Monsieur, and entreated Mademoiselle to try the good cyder.

'*Quelle bonne sauce, l'amour!*' Argentine said to Babette, who was mixing the salad.

'*Qui fait le monde à la ronde,*' quoted Babette.

For a few days Esther accepted gratefully the sunshine, the good food, the clean clothes. In a word she gloated. But dominating every sense was the astounding revelation of our paladin's loyalty and fidelity. The passion for these comes to most of us with advancing years, when, too late, alas! we may realise, with what poignant self-reproach, that such transcendent qualities in others have not been appreciated or even apprehended. Esther, after the loss of father and fortune, had seen more than one old acquaintance suddenly afflicted with short-sight when she approached. But Harry had remained faithful!

Our paladin stuck to his resolution of sleeping at the inn: an observance of the proprieties warmly approved by the little doctor, who himself, so he said, was of the most respectable. But very soon Esther asked herself whither the primrose path was leading. Her forehead puckered distressfully whenever she thought of the future. Was Harry still her Harry? Being a paladin he held his tongue. A weaker or a stronger man might have said: 'Tell me everything. Has the worst that can happen to a woman happened to you? If so, as true friends, let's face even that together.'

The worst, let us hasten to say, had not happened. Esther had been on the brink of the precipice more than once. Impor-tunity had almost beguiled her. Sometimes she wondered how she had escaped. What power had sustained her when the darkness encompassed her, when hunger tore at her vitals? At such awful moments she had thought of Sabrina—Sabrina who had starved, making the farther shore 'gainst wind and tide.

She could read interrogation in Harry's blue eyes.

Did he love her still? Did she love him? Can women ask themselves such questions? Do they not always know? She divined that he loved her, but she could not measure his love. Estimated by what he had done, it seemed deep as the sea, high as heaven. Yes: he loved her, and he stood, the hero at last, upon

the apex of the world's pyramid of true lovers, high above her. In her humility she grovelled at the base.

Did she love him ?

The cruel question obsessed her, for, admittedly, she was in love with love, enchanted with kind looks, words, and actions, the *petits soins* which have held thousands of sweet women bond to men unworthy of them. This feeling, so strong that she feared to analyse it, was sexless. If a woman had befriended her she would have thrilled with the same immeasurable gratitude and satisfaction ; but this fact, we may well believe, she had not yet grasped. Harry, as a youth, she had once loved : her first love. Surely she must still love the man grown to mighty stature who loved her. You must remember that it was not possible for her to know what is plain to us. Impulsive, free from vanity and self-consciousness, how could she conceive of her Harry posing, like a model, for the mere gratification of saying to himself : ' Behold, I am not as other publicans and sinners ' ?

No : he had rushed hot-foot upon her trail because he loved her.

Outwardly, she behaved with charming grace and gratitude. They made excursions to Dreux and Evreux and Chartres, and listening to her he could scarce believe that this was not his own girl of Palace Gardens, only wiser, ripier, and a more entertaining companion. Life without her, even in a lotus land, began to appear a desert. He wondered why he had found Alice Godolphin so amusing, not recollecting that the dancer had danced her way into his fancy to the good old tune set by flattery. She had told him, upon the first night they met, that he was the best-looking man in town and ' Awfully clever, I'm sure ! '

Esther flattered him also, quite unconsciously. Abased, she looked up with a tender gleam in her eyes which set our paladin ablaze.

' God help me ! I love her more than ever ! '

The exclamation broke from a tortured First Secretary of Legation alarmed by the new and bewildering character of his own sensations.

After dinner they sat together upon the terrace overlooking the river, listening to the tinkle of the fountain and the soft voices of the night. They talked little, but each was conscious of the sweet intimacy, the penetrating charm, which darkness quickens. Twice Harry took Esther's hand in his. But he refrained from

kissing it! At his touch the siren trembled. By the light of the stars he caught a glimpse of a heaving bosom.

'If life could always flow on like this,' she murmured.

At that, fearing to be too rash, unable to reply with a phrase which would satisfy the exigencies of an enchanting moment and at the same time not arouse expectations which a chivalrous gentleman might not be able to satisfy, our paladin had replied with, we fear, banality:

'It's getting rather chilly. Perhaps we ought to go indoors.'

Next morning she blushed when he appeared, and for the first time exhibited constraint in his presence and a nervousness which he divined he alone could put to flight. He said boldly: 'I slept badly,' and she replied: 'So did I.' Then they sighed. Each dreaded speech, and yet silence maddened them. For Esther saw how it was with him, and knew that she could pay her debt to her lover: every shilling in the pound, and compound interest beside!

He, for his part, while shaving that morning, had almost made up his mind to plunge blindly into honourable marriage. No man of his acquaintance—except, possibly, the friend in the Foreign Office spoken of already as a love-in-a-cottage simpleton—would so plunge. The very word indicated a descent. And he might be leaping head first into horrors. By this time it was obvious that Esther would sooner talk of anything under the sun and stars rather than those years which lay like a pea-soup fog between them. She had prattled gaily enough of some of her experiences in the hat shop—experiences at which our paladin had—well, sniffed. Not that the sniff was audible, but his nose—such a nice straight nose!—had been cocked at a higher angle. A stranger might have suspected that something was wrong with the drains. And he said with muffled indignation:

'That you should have gone through this!'

'But I liked it, Harry. It was great fun, really.'

'Fun?' He strangled a snort.

'Yes, fun. I learned a lot.'

'No doubt. If you had married me——! Five times I asked you. And when I was at Eton I used to say that I'd never ask a woman twice: I did indeed.'

'Eton boys put on too much side. If I had married you, Harry, where would you have been to-day? First Secretary at Buenos Ayres? I think not. Would your uncle have increased your allowance? Not he!'

'I told you once that money is not everything.'

'I'm ashamed to say that I accepted the statement with salt.

You are a paladin.'

He smiled and stroked his moustache. At last the scales were falling from her pretty eyes.

'Money or no money, I wanted you.'

'I was not quite fair to you.'

And then, swiftly, she had changed the subject. And afterwards, during the pleasant days that followed, she had seemed to divine that the time had not come for the last word, and that such a time must be fixed by him.

When would that time come?

They breakfasted together as usual, but Babette shook her head when her dishes returned to the kitchen. Name of a dog! What was the matter? Had Monsieur quarrelled with his so charming Mees?

Two days before, the trained nurse had bidden Esther good-bye. Before she went, she said with an illuminating smile: 'I shall assist at the wedding, Mademoiselle, if it takes place here.'

'The wedding?'

'Ah, Mademoiselle, we have all rejoiced. Monsieur is *très correct*, *hein*? But when you were ill——! *Oh—là—là!*'

'What do you mean?'

'He was not ashamed, even before us, to show how he adored you. And, always, you were miserable if he was away. And morning and evening you embrace him.'

'Good gracious!'

'You sit yourself on his knee.'

'I sit myself on his——!'

'And you call him "Brownie."'

'I behaved like a child, and he treated me as such.'

'Never, never in my life, have I seen so pretty and so sad a sight as you, Mademoiselle, on Monsieur's knee!'

'Evidently I looked upon Monsieur as my father.'

'That, alas! jumped to the eyes. But Monsieur, he look at you, Mademoiselle, as if you were a peach that he was forbidden to eat. The forbidden fruit—*hein*?'

Esther blushed, laughed, and kissed her nurse on both cheeks. After this confidential talk, and its bewildering revelations, she told herself that surely she did love Harry, because she had acclaimed him as her own when her poor wits wandered away.

They spent the next day or two in that dear sweet country, well named by our neighbours *le pays du tendre*, through which meanders the gentle stream of Courtship. Of its pure waters Esther drank deep, her paladin holding out the chalice, and refilling it twenty times a day. She saw him at his best, the *preux chevalier* on his knees before his lady, the very perfect knight, a Galahad. It seemed to be his will to treat her with a respect, a veneration, a delicacy absolutely enchanting. She told him again and again that he was 'wonderful.' Honestly, without a scintilla of doubt, he believed it, for he had almost made up his mind to marry her. Something had to be accomplished first—an interview with his uncle—but he regarded Esther as his future wife.

Why did he not tell her so, and have done with it ?

It is not easy to reply. Your procrastinator will let the heavens fall rather than deny himself the darling luxury of anticipation. Our Harry fell asleep smiling, and dreamed of the glow on Esther's face when her god stood revealed in all his glory ; and the interview with Lord Camber, if successfully accomplished, would be the crown of his high enterprise. Unhappily, he did not think of her, nor compute what suspense might be to a woman of her character and temperament.

An incident, very trifling in itself, presented our paladin in a less kind light. Babette wished to know if her services as cook would be required during the winter. A situation in Rouen had been offered. What should she say ?

'One must think of the winter, we others.'

The 'we' pierced, not to mention the preceding words. Esther shivered, thinking of the snow and hail. Ah, yes, it behoved all women to think of, to provide against—the winter. Knowing that Harry's leave would expire in November, she was about to answer that most assuredly Babette's services would not be wanted after that month. But she had been trained in a school where no under-strapper dares answer for a superior. As a shop-girl in the Great Emporium, at Southampton, the necessity of referring the most simple question to a paragon in a frock-coat had been scourged into her.

'I will speak to Monsieur,' she replied.

'I should like to cook for Mademoiselle for ever and ever. Mademoiselle comprehends that ?'

Esther kissed her rosy cheeks.

'What nice people there are in the world !' she said.

In the tiny garden, under the chestnut tree, her Harry lay asleep upon his *chaise longue*. Esther looked at him ; and a slight frown wrinkled her forehead, bringing out the cruel lines which good food and kind words had almost but not quite smoothed away. The book he had been reading, a French novel by Loti, had slipped from his relaxed hand to the ground. His head, tilted backward, was slightly on one side : the mouth was open : the chin had retreated an inch or two. After an excellent *déjeuner*, in a warm, soporific air, he slumbered sweetly, as a plump, pink baby slumbers after its mid-day bottle.

She examined him attentively.

The lower lip, she decided, was too full ; but the upper had been finely cut ; the chin left something to be desired, a less rounded contour, a sharper angle. Time might turn it into a jowl. And his curls, a thought too luxuriant, masked a brow not cast in the heroic mould.

She realised, with a shock, that she was criticising him, and not too favourably, and that, unconsciously, she had been trying to see him as he might be ten years hence. How disloyal !

She touched his forehead with her hand, and he woke.

'Babette wishes to know if you will need her after November.'

'Bother Babette ! What a drowsy afternoon !'

'You see, she must think of the winter.'

'Shall we walk, or go on the river, or sit here ?'

'Babette wants an answer at once.'

'Servants are so inconsiderate. I do not choose to give her an answer at once. If she wants to leave, I dare say we can find another cook.'

'Oh, no. She would like, so she says, to cook for us for ever and ever.'

'Tell her not to play the fool.'

'But—the winter ?'

'Good heavens ! Am I the sort of man to let a servant suffer ?'

'No.' She sat down beside him, and took his hand.

'I may keep on this house,' he added.

What was she to infer from this ? The colour flowed into her cheeks as she murmured :

'Harry, dear, you have said nothing to me of your plans.'

'Perhaps my plans are not quite in shape.'

Something in his tone, an inflection of reproach, of displeasure or disappointment, made her withdraw her hand. He saw shadows

on her face and frowned. When he spoke again his words had a distinctly sub-acid flavour.

'My dear girl, can't you trust me?'

'Ye—es.'

'Without trust—er—where are we? Have I done anything to make you distrust me?'

She remained silent.

'Perfect friendship—and—er—perfect trust are about the same thing, eh?'

He did not express himself well. What public-school man does? To talk like a book, in the opinion of his world, was to talk like a damned prig. He expressed himself better in French. This gives furiously to think, as our friends and allies say.

'Yes,' said Esther slowly, 'perfect friendship and perfect trust walk hand in hand. If they are not the same thing, they are twins.'

'Then why do you ask about my plans?'

She said no more.

How could she retort: 'I am to trust you, but you don't trust me. If you love me, if you think I love you, have I not the right to help in this shaping of plans? It is cruel, unjust, to leave me in the dark.'

Bitter experience had taught her that most men exact from women a trust which they are not willing to bestow in return. Her father had never trusted her. Had he done so, she might have stayed his hand when it reached for the pistol. Douglas Yorke had gambled away her future and his own, risking all upon a last throw. A word to her, and the catastrophe might have been averted. Her father had never really loved her, because that word was withheld.

From that instant, maybe, dated a reaction, against which she struggled helplessly. Sabrina had said years before—how long ago it seemed!—that Harry must not play the hero intermittently. Sabrina meant, of course, that he must not play the hero at all, being an amateur, and as such despised by the professional. But surely Sabrina would have admitted that what he had done during the past six weeks was heroic—the real thing? His chivalrous care of her had not been intermittent. Nevertheless, now he was weighing *pros* and *cons*, counting the cost, marking time. If he had been really adventurous, the true paladin of romance, how she could have adored him!

That afternoon he said abruptly : 'I'm going to leave you for a few days. You won't mind ?'

'Oh, no.' The words slipped out naturally. She wanted to be alone for a few days, so as to adjust her view of him, now out of focus. For a week he had filled the world.

'You said that as if you wanted me to go.'

'Harry !'

'Your face brightened : I swear it did.'

'How absurd you are !'

'That is the one thing I am not, thank the Lord ! Absurd ? I detest absurd people. And I like to know exactly where I am. I have some business in town, but I feared you would miss me most awfully if I left you alone.'

'Of course I shall miss you.'

'Do you know that when you were ill, you couldn't bear me to stay away more than an hour at the most ?'

'So the nurse told me. It was very funny.'

'What odd words you use ! I don't see that it was funny.'

'And I sat on your knee, and embraced you, morning and evening, *un bon bécot familial*, and called you "Brownie."'

She laughed to hide a deeper feeling, but he could not perceive that.

'I'm glad you're amused,' he said stiffly.

Next day, at noon, he departed, and she was left alone with her thoughts. She passed the first few hours in a reverie, inhaling the delicious air, so sparkling and yet so soft, giving herself up to the enchanting present. The weather was perfect. Around her, Mother Earth seemed to be resting after the travail of harvest. The leaves were turning, but not quite ready to fall. After the first frost the ground would be strewn with them. There was no wind, but towards evening a breeze floated up the river bringing with it the sublimated note of a distant bell. Esther sat under the chestnut tree, gazing into the rose-coloured haze out of which soared the spires of Rouen, contrasting this sweet scene with the slum from which a paladin had hailed her, hearing the shrilling of the crickets and the croaking of the frogs in the water-meadows. In the fields behind the cottage some peasants were singing, and below a barefooted *gardeuse de vaches* was driving home her kine.

Beyond this paradise seethed and simmered the world that works and starves ! Esther asked herself, with profound melancholy, whether she could go back to the crowd : the struggling myriads who had trampled her underfoot. Life, as she had

found it, appeared atrocious, intolerable, impossible ! And then suddenly, out of the shadows of the past, with a faint smile upon her lips, came a mental vision of Sabrina. Her friend seemed to be very near her, clothed in the samite of a guardian angel. Sabrina had fought against wind and tide, and had gained—rest. And now to Esther had been vouchsafed rest. But between this rest and herself stood her friend, with uplifted finger, bidding her pause and consider. So Sabrina had stood, in the Southampton slum, between a weary, desperate woman and the oblivion to be achieved by a leap from a window or a plunge into the river.

Esther closed her eyes, knowing that a grim struggle confronted her, and that she must choose now between the conflicting claims of the flesh and the spirit.

(To be continued.)

SOME
teleg
the
venie
of th
to co
a per
H
Part
of th
post
Traf
daug
with
his h
C
toml
there
early
here
in th
ally
educ
or a
tainl
hand
scho
to re
Y
she v
of g
was,
seda

AN OLD SERVANT.

BY S. G. TALLENTYRE.

SOME ninety years ago—before trains and steamboats, before telegrams and telephones, before omnibuses, lucifer matches, and the penny post, before everything, in fact, that makes life convenient and complicated—there was born at Shrewsbury, in one of those black-and-white striped houses of which some still stand to contribute to the picturesqueness of that charming old town, a perfectly obscure little girl.

Her father had been press-ganged in the days when Bony-Party was the pet scare, not only of all the nurseries, but of most of the households of England. He occupied the humble, useful post of tailor on board the *Victory* at the time of the battle of Trafalgar, and it was characteristic, but unfortunate, that his daughter's recollections and interests were entirely concerned with his tailoring, as an art, and not in the slightest degree with his having practised it on Lord Nelson and the *Victory*.

Charlotte Child—the name of Child will be found on many a tombstone in Church Stretton churchyard, and it may be deduced therefrom that her ancestry was numerous and not ignoble—was early sent, an anxiously conscientious little girl, as she became hereafter an anxiously conscientious woman, to a dame school in the town. Whether the dame schools of Shrewsbury were generally superior to the other dame schools of that exceedingly dark educational epoch, or whether little Charlotte lighted on a Biddy or a Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt of quite peculiar talents, it is certainly a fact that she learnt how to write a letter which, both in handwriting and expression, would put many a County Council scholar to the blush, and that she had at least enough education to read the *Times* for recreation in the evenings of her old age.

Yet it was not that little Charlotte was clever—unless, indeed, she was clever according to that worst and falsest of all definitions of genius as an infinite capacity for taking pains. She certainly was, from first to last, eagerly and thoroughly diligent. She walked sedately to school in the plainest straw bonnet with a ribbon,

through every kind of weather; and neither climate nor clergyman made church—the immensely cold, dismal, drawling, formal church of the epoch—impossible to her. She was a very plain little girl, but her unlovely face served her well. When the capricious local Lady Bountiful gave all the attractive dame scholars an outfit for service, Charlotte, now fourteen years old, had to save and sew at home to produce a trousseau, of the harshest material and remarkable for its stern absence of bow or trimming—learning thereby invaluable lessons of thrift, self-denial, and industry.

In her first, small, decent place, she was nursemaid, and set up, be sure, for her infant charges a standard of conduct and neatness wholesomely and impossibly high.

Then, walking one day beneath two ladders, on which stood a couple of house-painters painting a house, one dropped on the Child family Dunstable straw bonnet—Dunstable straw bonnets were costly, and Charlotte had inherited her mother's by right of primogeniture—a large spot of white paint, which the second house-painter suggested could be removed by turpentine.

It would not, perhaps, have been impossible that Charlotte should have fallen in love with the careless idiot who dropped the paint, but, given her character, it would have been of all things the most unlikely, while the suggestion of turpentine in itself paved a way to her heart. She walked out, soberly, discreetly, and in the fear of God, with Painter No. 2 for a respectable period; and then, aged eighteen, became formally engaged, receiving from him as a token an immense oval brooch, about the size of a duck's egg, having on the front the faces of two (unspecified) Roman emperors, and on the back a picture of Vesuvius in full eruption and a good deal of the rest of Italy as well.

Then, since means were too small to think of marriage, Charlotte, having given up her first place, answered an advertisement in the *Times*—one of those stately, condescending advertisements in which a Young Married Lady at Brixton expressed herself Willing (but not in the least anxious, understood) to take a thoroughly Respectable and well-recommended Young Woman into her service as Housemaid: proposing to give her in exchange for her dutiful service Eight Pounds a year, the young woman to find her own Tea and Sugar.

The worried employers who may now be seen kneeling in rows, as it were, in the columns of the daily papers, imploring the

service of female servants on their own terms, have absolutely nothing in common with that perfectly independent and entirely serene little lady who became Charlotte's mistress. She had been a certain Betty Dale, of Fowkes Buildings, Great Tower Street, in the City of London, daughter to a wine merchant, and now the very new wife of a Mr. James Barlow, a thoroughly worthy, respectable, affluent young man (young men were affluent in those days much sooner than they are now) given to blue swallow-tail coats and already to a little stoutness, and having a large, sober, comfortable house, filled with the richest mahogany furniture, in the (then) not wholly undesirable neighbourhood of Brixton.

Perhaps Charlotte, curtsying in that pompous dining-room (with a very small hair-cord box, which contained absolutely the whole sum of her worldly possessions, waiting for her in the passage outside), loved that very pretty, brisk, practical, and severely plain-spoken little mistress from the first. It is quite certain, at least, that her own devotedly diligent and dutiful nature soon learnt to profoundly respect and appreciate an employer who never accepted less than one's best work, to whom rust on the intricate steel fenders was as a sin and a sorrow, and the fine polish on the piano—a young Broadwood—was a glory and a joy.

Little Charlotte was just twenty—a couple of years younger than her mistress—and both had still some of the housewifely arts to learn, and learnt them together. The homely head of the maid and the pretty head of the mistress, put together, evolved one day the loveliest patent furniture polish, the recipe whereof is still to be seen in Madam Betty's book and fine handwriting, next to directions for making the Night Cap—a very powerful night-cap composed of a terrifying mixture of wines and spirits, of milk and lemon—of which Charlotte nightly administered a large glassful to her master after Family Prayers; and to her mistress a minute quantity, for company's sake.

It was in these early days, too, that Madam Betty began a war, which she was still waging indefatigably seventy years later at her death, on Charlotte's misuse of the aspirate. Poor Charlotte's intense conscientiousness and heroic efforts of memory never enabled her to overcome a habit of alluding to one of the guest chambers as the Harch-room, or to a minor prophet as Abbakuk.

Soon, as she did much fine needlework for her mistress, she had a little sitting-room reserved for her especial use; and there

sometimes, but not very often, she wrote a long, neat letter to the painter-lover, in which she faithfully described the ingredients of the patent furniture polish rather than the feelings of her heart; and dreamt a little over her sewing, all the same, of that small home she would keep for him, which, severely plain indeed, should yet have about it the fragrant peace that lay upon Madam Betty's.

Then, one dark day there came the news that the lover was injured—it might be mortally injured—by a fall from a ladder. Little Charlotte went, trembling and stricken, to her mistress; and Betty, whose sympathy was always perfectly practical, herself packed the maid's few possessions in the hair-cord trunk, wrapped her in a stout, warm shawl of plaid, and sent her off at once, in charge of a mentally and physically robust cook, to be placed in the next stage-coach starting for the West. All her life Charlotte remembered that cold, bewildered journey; and her strange sensation of unreality—of being, in some sort, a numb spectator of her own sorrows. She arrived too late. Fate and the cruel surgery of that day had done their worst. She stayed in her home six weeks, and then, bidden by her good little mistress, came back to Brixton, in a decent black shawl pinned with the Roman-emperor brooch He had given her, and in the family bonnet sadly dyed black, and took up her duties once more.

On the very rare occasions on which she mentioned the subject she owned simply that, though it seemed a little hard to her at the time, Madam Betty's strict insistence that all her work should be done as usual, and all done well, was the truest kindness. Tears made rust-marks on those immaculate fenders, and decidedly hampered her needle as she worked in the afternoons. So she gulped them down with many a choking sigh, until, at last, time had drawn its protecting film over the wound. The lover had been, indeed, the choice of her heart, but not the habit of her life. That life, her care, her interest, her labour, her devotion, were henceforth wholly her mistress's.

It is difficult to remember in these days, when inequality of social conditions is resented even by the people who profit by it, that in those it was as calmly accepted by the losers as the gainers. The night Charlotte returned to Madam Betty's service the two women first kissed each other when they said Good-night, and never omitted that tender little ceremony till Madam's death. But, not at all the less, Charlotte was always absolutely and respectfully convinced that Madam was not only the superior creature

and a different order of being from herself, but, to come at once to a practical application, that Providence itself desired and expected that for master and mistress should be the fine linen and lace of life, the great rooms rich in solid furniture and noiseless carpets, and for herself the bare boards of a small, severe bedroom, scrubbed to a very exquisite whiteness, a night-cap without the very ghost of a frill, and those wages of eight pounds a year, increasing by degrees—they took seventy years to do it—to five-and-twenty.

At an impossibly early hour in the morning Charlotte began her day by descending to the drawing-room—whose beauties of wool-worked sofa, curtains, cushions, and bell-pulls, of Dresden shepherd and shepherdess bowing to each other over a gilt clock on a white marble mantelpiece, Madam Betty had deeply impressed upon her—to dust and clean. No other hand but Charlotte's careful and reverent one was esteemed worthy to polish the large round table where Books of Beauty, very richly bound, 'Manfred,' which nobody in the house had ever read, and albums wherein Betty and her sisters had pressed flowers and seaweed and written little poems, were arranged in symmetrical patterns. Charlotte alone was entrusted—and deeply and palpitantly proud to be entrusted—with the keys of the cabinets containing wax roses, china, and Indian ivory fans. Every night she rolled up the curtains—worked in wools by her little mistress in that indefatigable spinsterhood—and, as it were, put them to bed; and every morning she got them up, or, more correctly, let them down.

After breakfast Charlotte headed the line of servants as they came in to prayers, and, with her thin, useful hands clasped on her lap, listened devoutly to master's reading of the Scriptures—at the same time managing to have a very keen eye for the short-frocked kitchen-maid, who had a tendency to giggle.

Then Charlotte pressed and folded her master's *Times*—the quaint little *Times* of seventy years ago—and laid out in the hall the coat and the neck-cloth in which, two or three times a week, he went on 'Change to see to the hop trade.

Once, only once, she omitted that important duty, and wept over the omission as she tied herself into that unfrilled night-cap when she went to bed, and lay, worried and awake, thinking of it, half the night. Charlotte was certainly not of that happy-go-lucky temperament which, for the possessor's own comfort,

is better worth having than thousands of gold and silver. But, *le monde aux inquiets* ! the happy-go-lucky temperament is not good for domestic service, and the servant possessing it would have stayed but a very short time in Madam Betty's household.

A large part of the mornings little Charlotte spent on a flight of steps, preventing the appearance of dust on the top of the huge baldachinos above the great four-post beds, or on the top of a sternly-scrubbed chair, kept for the purpose, dusting the pictures. Both she and her mistress were more than common small—it was the especial age, surely, of the tiny, quiet, determined, domesticated woman, downwards from that great little Lady who at that very moment was gathering the reins of the government of a mighty nation into her capable hands.

At one o'clock it was Charlotte's duty to bring in the dining-room lunch of cake, wine, and sandwiches ; as it was her duty also to bring in the nine o'clock evening tea, with the fat tortoiseshell tea-caddy, the little key whereof was in Madam's keeping, and which was always locked before Charlotte received it back again. It was not certainly that she, personally, was not trusted ; her mistress was simply following the universal custom of a day when tea was very little less expensive than wine.

Before Charlotte's six neat side curls—three on each side of the face—were tinged with grey, she had become in all household matters a Chief of the Staff, with Madam Betty as Commander of the Forces, and more zealous for her mistress's cause than the mistress herself.

It was among her many proud privileges in that position to act as lady's-maid on the rare occasions when self-helpful Madam Betty required such an adjunct. The large, ugly, comfortable bedroom, with Madam before the great glass—with its mahogany cap-stands on either side—arrayed in her purple dinner silk and her delicate old lace to dine with the Joneses of Clapham, and the homely maid, with her neat, brief skirts, white stockings and flat shoes, and her plain face eager with interest and pleasure, trying first the effect of this cap or ornament and then of that on Madam's charming little person, form a pleasant picture.

Presently James, in a rich, fancy waistcoat, would come in from his dressing-room and make jokes, which always amused him because Betty never saw them and Charlotte plainly, though respectfully, considered them as a sadly frivolous interruption to really serious and important business. It was Charlotte who put

her mistress into her fine embroidered shawl and the carriage; and waited up till eleven to hear how Mrs. Jones and the calf's head, which formed one of the removes, had each been dressed.

The mistress's pleasure and outings were, by proxy, the maid's, and she desired hardly any others.

What would have been the good of going shopping when one's clothes and bonnet were of the excellent, sober materials which last years and years; and when, out of eight pounds per annum, one was laying by a provision for old age, besides charitably helping an uncle with a leg chronically stiff, until Madam Betty wrote and said that, stiff or flexible, Charlotte's wages would assist it no more?

As for evenings out—it was not respectable for a decent young woman to be out in the evenings. Charlotte's nightly recreations were to read the *Times*—rather slowly, and shaking her head and curls a good deal over the strangeness of the world—and to knit and sew for some of the many charities befriended by her mistress.

For rest, God had appointed but one day in seven, and should His creatures say it was not enough? Every Sunday morning and afternoon Charlotte firmly ushered the other domestics into a pew in church just behind their master and mistress, and not only saw that they behaved decorously, but insisted—by the simple plan of poking them—that they should audibly join in the responses and the hymns. For herself, she listened devoutly, and got good even from a lugubrious old parson who wept tears over his own platitudes on to hands encased in black kid gloves.

But on Sunday evenings, after the nine o'clock tea in the drawing-room, when her master, with a very large silk pocket-handkerchief over his face, was soundly asleep, after a course of the devout and only literature permitted to the day, came the real delight of the week, and Charlotte, coming in softly with a stout book under her arm, was privileged to read aloud a sermon—such a tedious, worthy sermon!—to her dear mistress, and have her all to herself for a whole long hour.

The reading was, indeed, interrupted considerably by Madam's undaunted charges on Charlotte's aspirates and Charlotte's contrite apologies and corrections; and then by Madam falling suddenly from heaven to earth to inquire Charlotte's opinion on the origin of the strange flavour of the apple-pie which had formed part of the five o'clock Sunday dinner.

On the two solemn, set, annual occasions when her master and mistress left Brixton to pay visits, Charlotte was supposed to enjoy some relaxation, and if the position of the sentry on duty—or, shall one say, of Fafner guarding the treasure?—can be said to be relaxing, perhaps she did. To keep a lynx-eye on the younger domestics, and to continue her mistress's work of turning silly, flighty little minxes with flowers under their bonnets into tall, staid, valuable, respectable servants was Charlotte's ambitious and successful endeavour.

At first, once in three or four years, and then once in about ten years, Charlotte did have a real holiday on her own account, and returned to her relatives at Shrewsbury. But in time they died, or wandered. Before she was an old woman her only home was her mistress's—"thy people shall be my people and thy God shall be my God."

Time passed very quickly in that calm house and in the sober round of regular duties.

One day, it seemed, Madam and Charlotte were busily engaged in letting reefs into the backs of master's already stout waistcoats, and the next day, almost, the two women clung together in a long passion of tears by his death-bed.

After that, though they were not the less mistress and servant, they were the closer friends.

Every Sunday evening, at dessert, Charlotte had been called into the dining-room to receive a glass of port, which she sipped solemnly, desiring her respects and duty to her employers; now she drank it with "My love to you, ma'am" and a little tremble in her voice.

Presently good Madam Betty felt it her duty to entertain largely the relatives whom, in her husband's lifetime, he had preferred to take in small and infrequent doses. Charlotte—now herself between fifty and sixty and very little less slight and active than she had been at sixteen—had to endure parties of noisy, flaxen-headed children having tea (with jam) in her own little sanctum, or making slides down the oilcloth of the passage outside her room. A large undergraduate nephew of Madam's horribly outraged Charlotte's feelings one day by loudly demanding a hot bath in his bedroom—in a house where everyone and everything were kept exquisitely and spotlessly clean without the assistance of baths at all; and poor Charlotte returned from receiving the impossible order, muttering and greatly perturbed.

Still, not the less, her little room was principally ornamented with silhouettes—and later on with photographs—of generations of Madam's relations. The fair-haired little creatures she had kissed and punished sent her, in time, portraits of their own children; and, at last, there were their children's children upon her walls. He of the Order of the Bath—a ribald as well as a tactless young man—declared that in his aunt's house it was *de rigueur* to kiss the person who opened the door; and, indeed, this was at certain hours among Charlotte's multifarious duties. Respectful and very humble as she was, it became at last really impossible for her to help joining in a conversation when she brought in the evening tea and heard a guest ask some domestic question of which she (Charlotte), and she only, really knew the answer; and it was from long habit and acquaintance that she besought a middle-aged-girl visitor—whom she had tied, in her day, into bib and pinafore—to help herself carefully to mustard at dinner, lest she should spoil the handsome appearance of the mustard-pot.

It is thought that old Charlotte—she was getting really old by now—had a softer place in her heart—or was it that she had a softer heart?—for the failures and ne'er-do-weels among Madam's relatives than Madam herself.

Certainly, on hearing of the latest misdemeanour, the mistress went off briskly to her desk to write a most severe letter to the delinquent—Betty was never the coward that 'dares not speak plainly and home'—and when she consulted old Charlotte as to whether it would be immoral to combine and soften the sermon with a cheque, old Charlotte, shaking the curls and the violet cap-ribbons meditatively, invariably came to the conclusion that it certainly would *not*.

Once, when twins were born to the impecunious niece who could not afford them, and one quickly died, Madam wrote gravely and practically to her sister that she was 'relieved to hear one of the twins was dead. It must be a great comfort to the Mama to know her poor child is so happily provided for, *without expense*'; and it was spinster Charlotte, sitting with gnarled hands clasped on her black silk apron and looking thoughtfully in her neat fire, who shed a few quiet tears for that 'flower, no sooner blown than blasted.'

The great old age which made Madam Betty cheerfully stout and left her her rosy cheeks, pretty gay eyes, and happy nature, dealt less kindly with the friend and maid. Before her allotted

fourscore years and ten Charlotte had come; indeed, to 'withered weak and grey'; was deaf, and worried at being deaf; dreadfully anxious to do all her duties just as usual, and sadly conscious they were getting beyond her; still loving better than anything in the world to serve that dearest mistress—to dress her for dinner in the fine laces and evening cap—although often and often now Madam had to pat the lady's-maid on the shoulder and call her 'a silly girl' for bringing the wrong ones. The silly girl of ninety hobbled away, greatly distressed, to correct the error. It was not that Madam desired or expected too much of her, but always that she desired and expected far too much of herself.

At prayers now, Charlotte, instead of heading the line of servants, sat by the table, very close to her mistress, trying to hear—and failing to hear exasperatingly often—the chapter and verse when Madam Betty gave them out. Then she dropped her spectacles, and by the time she came up from under the table, where she had been looking for them, had forgotten the chapter and verse again. "Did you say Hobadiah, ma'am?" and Madam, returning, still hopeful, to the old charge, replied quite severely: 'Charlotte, I never say *Hobadiah*.'

Sometimes, on a Sunday evening, Charlotte still stumbled through a sermon—which prophesied most positively the end of the world for 1850, the date of the reading being the beginning of the following century—and Madam Betty listened more attentively than of yore, and yet sometimes let aspirates pass uncorrected.

But if her mistress knew, so, very well, did old Charlotte herself, that her day was done before it ended. She had to relinquish first one duty and then another; to stand by and see another generation do passing badly what she had done perfectly well, and to find at last that to die soon enough is a more difficult art than to live long.

One night she kissed her mistress Good-night, looking at her lovingly, as ever, with her old, tired eyes. But on the morrow it was the old, tired eyes that opened as usual on the work-a-day world, and Madam Betty's blue ones that saw the morning dawn—Beyond.

At first Charlotte did not realise the immensity of her loss. From immemorial habit she sat sewing in her little room and mercifully forgot that her mistress was not at her writing-desk in *her* room as usual—getting inebriates into homes, and drafting

girls
heart
trifle
dwell
M
funer
day
neph
comi
vent
T
—in
and
to w
his
on l
tear
and
had
wor
and

and
Bet
silv
Ch
yea

Th
mo

dre
kn
an

th
ap
ha
an

girls out of workhouses. On the stab that pierced her poor old heart when she hobbled in to consult Madam about some important trifle in the needlework, and found her place empty, one need not dwell.

Mercifully, Charlotte was too old to be consulted about the funeral arrangements, and too deaf even to hear them. That dark day left her only with a very confused memory of several elderly nephews of the house, whom she mistook for their own fathers, coming in to talk to her in respectfully lowered voices which prevented her hearing a word they said.

The realisation of desolation came when, one wintry morning—in charge of a great-niece who had come from Shrewsbury and was to take her back there—she left at ninety-one the home to which she had come at twenty. The coachman—he had served his mistress a mere trifle of five-and-thirty years—was in tears on his box as he drove her to the station. Old Charlotte shed no tears. She had passed beyond them. At Shrewsbury the black-and-white house in the narrow, steep street, where she was born, had long been pulled down. The only relative she had left in the world was the great-niece—very kindly, but sixty years her junior, and whom she had never seen before.

Madam had left Charlotte an annuity—an annuity, tenderly and well thought out, sufficient but not exorbitant—as Madam Betty would. But much better than that she had left her a little silver Georgian teapot—one of her own wedding presents—which Charlotte had reverentially admired and polished for seventy years.

To have her tea out of that lovely teapot was her last pleasure. The clergyman who came to shout the Psalms in her ear did her more good by admiring its exquisite shape.

Presently she took to her bed entirely. Old, old, old! What dreams and thoughts come into those worn minds none shall know till—old, old, old—he dreams them himself. From dozing and dreaming, she slept into death at last.

The lavish encomiums justly pronounced on the greatly good, the wide benefactors of the race, would be wholly absurd as applied to this very narrow life. Yet which among them shall have a better title to the last, divine eulogy: 'Well done, good and faithful servant'?

THEIR HEARTS' DESIRES.

FORSHAW, K.C., was not only a great name at the Parliamentary Bar, but once for a whole week it was a household word throughout the country. As a rule, fortunes are made at the Parliamentary Bar by men whose names are received with reverence in Westminster, but are unknown to the spokes and tyres of that wider world of which Westminster is only the hub. Robert Forshaw, as you remember, sprang into fame in opposing the Atmosphere Concession Bill, which was promoted by a syndicate of the tribes headed by the cleverest of the Tomato Brothers, who proposed to corner the whole air of England to a height of three miles from the earth for the purposes of aerial traction. It was Forshaw's cross-examination of the finance of the scheme which burst it up, and a grateful nation printed his portrait in libellous photographic smudges in halfpenny papers, wrote imaginary biographies of him, and talked about him for seven days, and then forgot all about him. Still it is something at the Parliamentary Bar even to have been heard of at all.

Robert Forshaw was certainly a man to be envied. At fifty-two he had everything one would suppose that a man could desire. He had a fortune which he had made for himself, a profession of which he was the acknowledged leader, ample leisure and vacation, many interesting friends, and no wife. But true it is, as the philosopher says, that he only is happy who knows himself to be so, and Forshaw's knowledge stopped short of that point.

It was a foggy afternoon in November, and he sat in the smoking-room of the Addison Club—he affected literary society—the whole six foot of him deep in thought in an arm-chair before a glowing fire. His steel-grey eyes were fixed on a bronze lion on the clock as though he intended putting a poser to him in cross-examination; his finger and thumb thoughtfully caressed his square lower jaw, and his broad nose quivered as he gave two or three hasty snorts—a habit of his on the rare occasions on which he was puzzled. He shook his head and rose from the chair, and touched the bell. A waiter came in and paused before him for a moment or two as he stood with his full broad side—and it was a broad side—to the fire, apparently lost in thought.

The waiter coughed.

'A sherry and bitters.'

'Yes, sir.'

The waiter had reached the door when, with that rapid mental alertness that made him the terror of surveyors and engineers, he suddenly shifted his ground, and, holding a warning finger in the air at the waiter, to indicate to him that it was his mistake and not counsel's, he said with a regretful accent on the first word: 'Gin and bitters.' The waiter blushed at his error, and withdrew in confusion, and Forshaw sank into his chair sighing to himself: 'That used not to be necessary, but there's no doubt about it—I'm losing my appetite, I'm losing my appetite.'

And that was the tragedy, and it was a real tragedy for Robert Forshaw, and the first that had entered his life. For when you have lived with a hearty jovial companion for over fifty years, and sat at every meal with him, and seen him go from your board when you had had enough of him, and welcomed his return with the clang of the gong, and if you have awakened in the morning to find your friend waiting with a cup of tea and bread-and-butter, and sat up with him at night in the supper-room at the Addison over oysters and bacon sandwiches and tripe—if you have had a life-long friend like this, never jaded, never tired, always at his best, always seeking to make life brighter and better for you, is it not indeed a tragedy to see him fading away before your eyes and to know that you are losing him for ever? And Forshaw's appetite was well known in restaurants and places where they cook. Not only was it a large and healthy one, but it was recognised to be of a discerning and cultured nature, and those whose duty it was to minister to the rich and hungry felt that to have pleased Forshaw and his appetite was in itself a diploma.

But even in the face of the gravest disaster, an Englishman must order his dinner and do his best to eat it. Forshaw sipped his gin and bitters, and sent for the butler, with whom he remained in careful conference for a considerable time.

'It's a difficult matter, Rowlands, to order a dinner for a young fellow like my nephew, with the digestion of an ostrich, and Professor Taliesin Jones, who is next door to a vegetarian.'

'It is indeed, sir,' said Rowlands, gravely admiring, with a kindly professional courtesy, the gifted amateur choosing the items of the bill of fare.

'And it is a task I have little heart for, Rowlands. I shall

just taste the ham omelette. It is all I can do to-night. My appetite is going.'

'Don't say that, sir,' said the butler fervently, with a slight tremor in his voice.

'But it is so,' said Forshaw, simply and calmly, as the hero speaks when he knows that the battle is lost, 'it is so.'

'General Mackenzie, sir,' said Rowlands deferentially, 'says a gin and vermouth. French vermouth——'

'No, Rowlands, no,' said the great man, with a resolute smile. 'It is a kindly suggestion and well meant, but you cannot bring the dead to life with a cock-tail.'

Rowlands bowed humbly, and glided softly from the room, with a feeling in his butler's heart that the saying he had just heard was a text from some unwritten scripture.

But whilst we bury our dead, and hug the sadness of it to our hearts in the silent hours of our lives, we cannot afford to let these sad pleasures hinder us in our duties to the living. Robert Forshaw threw his lost appetite boldly out of his mind, and focussed his thoughts on his plans for his nephew's career. Herbert Forshaw was an orphan, the only son of Robert's younger brother who had died penniless. Brought up to the Church, Herbert Forshaw, senior, had left it for the stage and married young. Some said that the two brothers were estranged over their love for the same lady, and that they shook hands over her grave, when the curtain rang down on her life and rang up on the life of her son. How that may be I cannot say, but when, after a few years of the anxious life of an actor out of an engagement, death cast Herbert for a leading part in a funeral, his brother Robert adopted the boy, and since then he had been as much his son as a boy can be to a man who is only a bachelor.

Even if he had been a real father, Robert Forshaw might have blundered in the same way; for, to the world without end, there will always be some foolish parents who expect their children to do as they have done, earn as they have earned, live over again their own laborious lives, and arrive at their own petty triumphs. Fortunately youth knows better, and goes its own way to its own particular north pole. And though many be lost on the way, and eaten by bears and frozen in the deep snows, yet, as they are willing to go, it is well not to hinder them; for it is the world's way, and the world will not be denied its victims. And happy is the son whose father has learnt that, when his boy's time comes to go into the battle of life, the father's not dishonourable task is to attend

to the commissariat department, and send up regular supplies from the base as long as there are any to send, and to equip a hospital and keep it ready in case of accidents, and to leave the fighting to be done by the young soldier on his own. But Robert Forshaw, having lived a self-centred, highly successful, unmarried life, was about as ignorant of the real facts of life as any unopened oyster. He treated young Herbert as he would have treated a sewage scheme, or an amalgamation of townships into a borough, or a project for a new water-way. He mapped out every inch of his life from the cradle to the grave. He prepared balance sheets of every year of his career, and he looked forward to the day when a golden key should open for his nephew the brazen doors of the Parliamentary Bar. In his dreams he saw the great Robert Forshaw, K.C.—Forshaw I.—stepping from his throne at Westminster, and Herbert, —Forshaw II.—accepting from the loyal body of Parliamentary agents the oath of their allegiance.

And whilst Herbert was at school and college all had gone well, for Herbert was of a soft docile nature, and though outwardly not unlike his uncle, having his large nose and square chin, yet in thought and manner his uncle noticed, not without uneasiness, that what individuality he possessed was his own, and not of the kind that was likely to hold sway over the unruly cunning of the expert witness. For young Herbert did not excel in mathematics as his uncle had done, but was a great player of games, and looked at the world demurely out of brown liquid eyes which had not that steely glance of old Robert's, so terrifying to the imaginative surveyor whose percentages would not stand criticism. Robert, all his life, had made men feel like worms before him; Herbert made men feel like butterflies—'butterflies all gold'—and that is no use at the Parliamentary Bar. But Robert had not found all this out as yet. He knew Herbert was fond of the serious drama, of music, of literature. It did not trouble him. He remembered that one of the lights of the Parliamentary Bar was an adept at conjuring tricks, and it was this faculty that had carried him into the very highest ranks of society. He knew also that Herbert was a friend and companion of the Rev. Albert Crosier, whose East End Mission was much talked of, and he had warned Herbert not to waste too much of his time over his friend's schemes. But Herbert, somewhat jesuitically I fear, had pointed out to his uncle that at Crosier's Mission you met really good people, and that it was through Crosier's introduction he had made the acquaintance of Mrs. Allhallows, the wife of

the senior partner in Allhallows, Cleek and Sharp, of Victoria Street, the great Parliamentary agents, and Mrs. Allhallows had asked him to spend the week-end at her home at Purley. When Robert heard about that he acknowledged to himself that one must not hastily condemn even an East End Mission. For he knew Allhallows well, and had heard him speak of two daughters, and if, as he knew sometimes happened, youth began to sigh for companionship and a wife, here was an alliance that might make his succession to the Forshaw throne a certainty. And the more he dreamed over the picture of his lucky nephew—with a mourning thought of himself and his lost appetite—the more he envied him his career and his triumphal march to power in a great profession, and his present youth and good looks and buoyant spirits, and, above all, his strong, healthy appetite.

And to crown his dreams as he was nodding in the chair in his dark corner, in comes young Herbert, leaping from his hansom like Bacchus from his chariot in Titian's picture, and bounding up the club stairs bringing a whiff of fresh air and young life into that literary mausoleum. And the uncle wakes up and looks at the lad, and envies him more than ever in his heart, for he was good to look on. And now Professor Taliesin Jones appears, and he beams through his brown beard when he shakes hands with the lad. For young life will melt the heart even of a geologist. And though the Professor knows more about coal measures and water-bearing strata, and can swear harder about dark geological prophecies with less fear of breaking down in cross-examination than any known expert witness, yet he, too, has a soft corner in his heart for young Herbert. But he does not look at him through his gold-rimmed spectacles with blue eyes of envy or pride, but rather of kindness and pity. For the Professor is a Welshman, and beneath that long, brown beard of his there beats a Welsh heart which is full of poetry and imagination, and he knows enough of uncle and nephew and their plans and schemes to know that, unless miracles happen, they will not easily meet their hearts' desires. And though the Professor in geological things is a sound rationalist, and will hear of no miracles in the coal measures, and will fight any cleric who threatens his theory of the millstone grit deposit with Asiatic folk-lore, yet, as his name should imply, he is a bard and has been called in his bardic name within the magic circle in the castle of Carnarvon, and has the right of entry into the Gorsedd. And deep down in his nature, as it is with all true Welshmen, his religious instinct tells him that this

is still an age of miracles, in which the heart's desire is only granted to human beings by the agency of the unseen.

So much good did the arrival of his nephew and his friend work toward Robert Forshaw that he added a preface of six oysters to the menu, to Rowland's great pleasure, and finished his own share with real heartiness.

And, the dinner over, Robert and the Professor were to discuss a forthcoming waterworks bill, the geological destruction of which was to be left to the latter; so young Herbert thoughtfully withdrew to the play, and left the seniors to their coffee and cigars, not heeding his uncle's suggestion that he would learn a great deal if he joined the conference.

For more than an hour the two elders talked geology and law, in their immediate relation to the prevention of carrying pure water to an urban population. Water led indirectly to food—a subject all men delight in—as one in which each has some peculiar experience to relate. Food reminded Forshaw of his loss, and as even an acquaintance is sympathetic with the food tragedies of another's life—not knowing how soon he may be in a like case—he resolved to break the matter gently to the Professor.

'There is no doubt about it,' he said, summing the matter up in a phrase; 'I am not losing my appetite; I have lost it.'

'Is it really as bad as that?' asked the Professor, with a sigh of sympathy.

Forshaw nodded.

'If you had been a vegetarian,'—began the Professor.

'Then I should not have even the pleasure of memory left to me,' replied Forshaw. 'At all events I have had an appetite.'

'There are dishes that a vegetarian may put before a robust appetite without a blush,' asserted the Professor.

Forshaw shook his head.

The Professor described at length a 'cauliflower au gratin,' and annotated his discourse with the various addresses on the Continent, and especially in Northern Italy, where the right kind of cheese might be bought.

'That is all very well in its right place towards the end of a meal, but it is not a meal. I might play with it to-day, but, as I say, I have lost my appetite.'

'And the doctors?' asked the Professor, 'what do the doctors say?'

'The doctors!' repeated Forshaw contemptuously. 'They are

men of one idea; they have only one prescription. Exercise! I hate exercise.'

'You should try golf,' suggested the Professor.

'I did try golf when I was at Cannes the other day,' replied Forshaw angrily; 'it irritated me.'

'It does,' answered the Professor thoughtfully; 'and that perhaps is its chief value.'

'Now look at that nephew of mine, Herbert,' interrupted Forshaw. 'There he is as strong as a horse, ready to eat anything; and at that confounded game you mention he can give me any handicap you like and leave me standing. What is the use of all I have worked for, of my wealth and experience and knowledge, when the prizes of the world are taken from me and given to him? I would pay a big price to change places with the fellow. I had no such uncle to start me in life!'

'But, my dear Forshaw, you have done better without; you have won the top rung of the ladder by your own power and ability.'

'Any fool ought to get to the top rung of a ladder who once gets his foot on the bottom rung,' grumbled Forshaw; 'the toughest fight is at the foot of the ladder. But why climb ladders at all? Why not remain on the ground? What is the good of it all?'

'I can see you do want exercise; the doctors are right. When a man becomes morbid and disappointed with life, it is as if the "Cwn Wybir" had appeared, the Dogs of the Sky as we call them in Wales, and we all know what they forebode.'

'I've heard you talk that kind of nonsense, Jones, once before, and that was after dinner,' said Forshaw grimly. 'How can a sensible successful man like yourself talk about sky dogs and forebodings?'

'I suppose it is as impossible for a Welshman to explain his beliefs to a Saxon, as it is for a Saxon to understand and speak our language. But I must lend you my grandfather's book on apparitions and spirits. I dare say you never even heard of the Rev. Edmund Jones, of Monmouth.'

'Has anyone ever heard of him?' laughed Forshaw, with the good nature of the ignorant.

Professor Taliesin Jones winced at the disrespect shown to his ancestor.

'My grandfather, who was a clergyman of the Church of England, had not only a firm belief in the ghosts and goblins and fairies of Wales, but wrote his book to prove that unbelievers like yourself

were Sadducees, or, at the best, men of weak and womanish understandings.'

The Professor spoke with the heat that is kindled by knowledge and faith, and Robert Forshaw, who had a fine instinct for the ring of truth in the sound of the human voice, leant over and placed his hand softly on his friend's arm saying: 'I am sorry; I did not know we were within two generations of a man who believed in fairies.'

'You are in the presence of such a man,' said the Professor solemnly. 'I have heard the fairy music more than once.'

'Hm! Hm!' ejaculated the King's Counsel.

'And more than that,' continued the Professor, stroking his beard and speaking with great deliberation, 'if your eyes were not blind and you could see the fairies, I make no doubt they could find your lost appetite and give you your heart's desire.'

'Now you are jesting with a serious subject,' said Forshaw, jumping up. 'I wish I had not told you about my appetite, if you can do nothing else but make fun of my confidences.'

'My dear Forshaw, I only spoke what I believed.'

Fortune at this moment brought young Herbert back, and with him the spirit of good humour. Forshaw greeted him with a laugh.

'The Professor here is a believer in ghosts and goblins and fairies. What do you think of that, Herbert?'

'That is grand,' said Herbert, beaming on the Professor. 'It was Ibsen's "Master Builder" to-night. He, too, believed in trolls and spirits.'

'It is the country you are born in, I expect, that enables you to know the truth,' said the Professor, nodding to Herbert.

Herbert sighed. He had been born in Birmingham.

Robert Forshaw threw up his hands in mock despair, saying, 'Are we all mad, or are we three sane men sitting in the smoke-room of the Addison Club? Is yonder light an eight-candle Edison-Swan, which badly wants renewing, or a corpse candle, and shall I ring for some whiskey and soda?' The last words were a cold douche to the Professor's superstitions, for if he was a vegetarian and a believer in apparitions, he was no teetotaller, and held strongly that the usquebaugh of Scotland was a lineal descendant of his own native metheglin, a heresy that brought him into distasteful conflict upon education boards with many prominent antiquarian Nonconformists, who declared that metheglin was a sort of unfermented tonic water.

And with the whiskey Professor Taliesin Jones justified his

godfathers and godmothers, for he started to sing the praises of his native country in a rhythmic chant with well-chosen adjectives picked out of the cold scrap-heap of the Saxon tongue, but made glowing with a foreign glory and brightness under the hammer of a Welsh accent. And he sang of exercise and golf links and sand-hills and star-grass and bunkers such as can only be found in wild Wales. And in all honesty to Merionethshire he did not omit the links of Aberdovey or of Harlech, and Rhyl was chosen as the fairest of Denbighshire, and the Morfa of Conway and the dainty stripling course at Pwllheli were swept into his saga of praise. And the two Forshaws were seized with the great desire that sometimes warms even the sluggard Saxon and moulds him into a poet and prince in spite of his Lowland clay. There crept over uncle and nephew a wild longing to stand in the presence of the Welsh mountains and to call themselves blessed.

A middle-aged under-secretary of state, reading the 'Times' at the other end of the room, saw only a wild, brown bearded giant with his spectacles pushed up on his forehead, a tumbler of whiskey waving in one hand, and the other going up and down like a semaphore—heard only a continuous gabble punctuated by the Welsh falsetto comma notes which seemed to put new life into the speaker.

But the Forshaws were under the spell of a bard who was opening their blind eyes to the light of a new Heaven. Herbert flung wide the doors of his soul and took the poet into its inner chambers, harp and crown and flowing robes and all. Robert would at first have willingly given him sixpence to play in the next street, but he began by listening, and then, when he would have bid him cease, his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth and he was a prisoner under a spell, and at length a willing one.

And the Professor now sang of the Llandudno links where appetites are lurking in every bunker. He cursed the builders who had encroached on their beauties and the blasphemers who stole God's glorious sand-hills which He had made so lovingly with centuries of winds and storms, and he called down vengeance on the men who carted them away to mix the sea-sand of them into inferior mortar. And when he had swept these ignoble ones into a Gehenna suburb of their own building, he sang of the strange romances that the watchers of old had seen from these very links—of the great flood that had overwhelmed the ancient city whose foundations are yet to be seen at low tide on the Conway sands,

and of the Roman pearl fisheries in the river whose mussels are to-day famous among humble cooks, and of many another long-forgotten history. And then came word-peasants of praise of the scenery, and the atmosphere, and the winter climate, and lastly of the links themselves, in which he recited, with circumstance and not without pomp, his own record round of ninety-seven as he had indeed done it, closing his song swan-like with unselfish praise for the glorious bunker at the eighteenth hole that had robbed him of an eighty-five.

And as he finished, old Robert and young Herbert shouted in one voice, 'We ought to go there.'

'To-morrow,' said the Professor.

'And why not?' asked Robert. 'You can leave chambers for a few days, eh, Herbert?'

'If you wish it,' replied the nephew humbly.

'You will come back a golfer with an appetite,' said the Professor.

'You almost persuade me to be a golfer,' said Robert smiling; 'but what about an hotel?'

'To really enjoy the full beauty of the place,' continued the Professor, 'at this time of year you must stay at a charming hotel at the foot of the Orme. It faces south, and looks across the links and over the sea to Penmaenmawr. It is an historical house, too. Carroll is said to have written "Alice in Wonderland" there.'

'Really!' said Herbert, full of interest and enthusiasm.

'Anyhow, I believe there is no doubt that it was over the Conway sands that the Walrus and the Carpenter wept together—and well they might.'

'I shall try your prescription,' said Robert Forshaw with determination, and he rang for the Bradshaw.

'How on earth did you manage to get uncle to move?' asked Herbert of the Professor as they walked north towards Herbert's rooms, which were in Gower Street.

'You heard all, my boy,' said the Professor. 'This only is the witchcraft I have used, but for the matter of that your uncle does not believe in witchcraft, or magic, or spells, or fairies. Fancy a man like Robert Forshaw, who can knock sense into a House of Commons Committee and make them really understand things or believe they do for the moment—fancy a man like that scoffing at miracles and witchcraft.'

'You were talking about fairies or something of that sort when I came in,' said Herbert; 'do you really believe in them? Don't laugh at me, but Ibsen—you know I admire his plays tremendously—and he seems to me to really believe in these supernatural things. What do you think?'

'Of course I don't think about it at all; I know. I was a quarry man, as I dare say you have heard, for many years before I came out of it to teach people things, and we worked in gangs there, and could choose our places to a certain extent. Now, all the while I was in the quarry I had a "knocker."'

'A "knocker"?' asked Herbert.

'Yes, a little "familiar," who found the best places for me and knocked to attract my attention to them. Whenever our gang had to move, I went into the quarry alone and listened for the "knocker," and he always showed me good places.'

'But why did they always send you?'

'Because I alone could hear him,' said the Professor simply.

'And you have no doubt that you really did hear him, and that he was knocking for your benefit?'

'Of course—of course!' said the Professor impatiently. 'It's the same in all these things, in every thing we call supernatural. Only he that has eyes to see can see, and only he that has ears to hear can hear. You must be a receiver tuned to the truth in order that it should reach you.'

Herbert had arrived at the door of his lodging and opened it, and he and the Professor walked in together, continuing their discourse without noticing that they had left the street. Herbert lighted the lamp and made up the fire quite mechanically, and the Professor continued to pour out his theories of the supernatural whilst he sat down before the fire with his hat and coat on and loaded a pipe.

'The principle of the whole thing is to be found in wireless telegraphy; but, of course, it is nothing new. There is nothing new under the sun, and there is nothing more remarkable about wireless telegraphy than there is in human speech, for instance. Here I am emitting sounds at a furious rate of speed, and somehow or other you are receiving them and translating them into some sort of sense at an equally marvellous rate. Now, if I spoke in German or Welsh you couldn't receive my message.'

'Not a syllable,' replied Herbert.

'Well, that's just it. Every message is true and real or every

message is false and void, according to whether or no you have the power to receive it. I receive fairies ; your uncle doesn't.'

Herbert laughed. 'I should think he doesn't!' he said.

'He might in time,' said the Professor musing.

Herbert shook his head.

'The things of this world that most of us delight in—excepting food, of which he is, or has been, an excellent receiver—but the main things of life, beauty, love, poetry, drama, don't interest Robert Forshaw.

'Isn't it sad?' continued Herbert, his eyes full of pity. 'Of course I envy him all his wealth and power and ability, but he doesn't see things as I do—as we do.'

'You are right, as we do—out of business hours, but only out of business hours, remember. Now, I dare say if your uncle was here he wouldn't notice that portrait on the mantelpiece, and would not see that it was a very pretty woman's face.'

'He didn't. I put it there for him to see,' said Herbert blushing.

'Ah!' said the Professor, smiling enthusiastic foolishness from ear to ear, and with a tear of joy rolling along his nose. 'Then she has rung you up on the bell of your heart, eh?'

'Yes,' said the youth, leaning on the mantelpiece and gazing into the bromide reproduction of her eyes and reading wonderful messages there.

'And you were there when she rang?'

'I have always been there.'

'Hm! Line engaged then, eh?' asked the Professor.

'For ever, I hope.'

'Well, I'm glad of it. You are not a bad fellow, and I like the girl.'

'She is a country-woman of yours, Professor.'

'I knew it. It's Connie Roberts, isn't it?'

'Why, how on earth—'

'Her father was at college with me. He's a High Church parson at Llanfihangel.'

'Yes,' said Herbert, rather sadly. 'It's a very poor living, only a hundred and twenty a year.'

'And that's more than ten pound per annum per head on the congregation.'

'How curious you should know her—and I'm sure you like her,' said Herbert ardently.

'She is more to me than you can imagine, Herbert. Had I had my heart's desires I might have had my friend's good fortune; but I do not envy him, for it is her happiness.'

The Professor cut short his musings with a shrug and a sigh.

'Have you told your uncle yet?' he asked.

'Not yet,' said Herbert.

'The sooner the better,' said the Professor.

'It is very difficult,' sighed the young man, 'my uncle does not understand these things; and then he has ambitions for me—quite absurd ambitions that I can never fulfil.'

'One never knows what one can do till one is in it,' said the Professor contemplatively.

'In what?' asked Herbert.

'I was thinking of bunkers at the moment,' apologised the Professor; 'but life is much the same thing—it is full of sand.'

'That's why the walrus and the carpenter wept, perhaps,' laughed Herbert. 'But, oh! if I had my uncle's wealth and abilities!'

'Well, tell him all about it whilst you are in Wales. He wants an appetite and envies you, and you want a wife and envy him. There's work for fairies for you, indeed! But there are plenty of appetites and wives in Wales, which is the home of all good things. Ten thousand dragons! my boy, it is after one o'clock! I wish I were going with you.'

And with a hearty shake of the hand the Professor bundled out into the street.

And he said to himself, as he walked along Oxford Street humming 'Land of My Fathers,' that he knew exactly how it would all happen; but then, he was a bard—though the short-sighted Metropolitan policeman who watched his westward course had more than a suspicion that he might be an offence under the Licensing Acts.

And it happened as all true tales of that beautiful country must happen—happily. It was a glorious late November morning when Robert and his nephew walked on to the verandah of the hotel and saw the waves rolling in before their feet, and away to the left over the Deganwy Rock the sun rising—not struggling through a mist and fog, but rising with certainty and decision, and lighting up the hills of Conway and flinging his rays along the slopes of Penmaen-bach, and with them touching the pleasant shores of the Menai Straits near Bangor.

They breakfasted at the open window, the sun gaining in power every moment. So young did Robert Forshaw feel as he shouldered his clubs and they walked down to the links that he said to his nephew, 'The Professor is right. The Riviera may be the place for princes and princesses, but this is the place for men and women.'

And the word 'women' seemed to Herbert his cue to speak, and in an outburst of enthusiasm he told his uncle all about the woman, the angel of the 'church of angels'—for so the Saxon translates the one beautiful place-name Llanfihangel—and he showed him her photograph, which Robert looked at as though it were the plan of a suburban area, and returned without any offers of amalgamation or federation. And Herbert, having once begun, set forth his desires to enter the Church and live away from the bustle and heat of the town—always, of course, with Connie—in some country vicarage.

And all these things did not seem to Robert Forshaw as hopeless and foolish as they would have done if they had been uttered in King's Bench Walk, for instance. For the gulls were calling to each other in the blue sky, and the little waves were slapping each other on the sands; and they were in a land of romance that even the builder has not wholly ruined. And as they approached the first tee, Robert Forshaw said in a kindly way, 'We will discuss this matter further this evening; but I am rather sorry you told me just now, Herbert.'

'Why, uncle?'

'I am afraid it may put me off my drive.'

But it did not, and for the first two holes the uncle did not require the stroke a hole that the younger man conceded. And so pleased was he with his success that when Herbert's caddie told him 'the chapel was the line,' and Herbert sliced into the hinterland of sand and star-grass, Robert rallied him on bringing his clerical antipathies into a game, and laughed the more heartily at the jest as he took from him another hole.

But as the day went on the fortune of it, as is the world's way, went to the young. With envy and a sad heart Robert watched his nephew driving long and straight, approaching dead, and hitting the back of the hole with his putt. The more Robert tried to remember and put into practice the things that the professional at Cannes had taught him, the less did he meet with any success. True it was that, as he exclaimed at every hole and Herbert diplomatically agreed, 'luck was against him.' It seemed to him

that whenever he made a good shot bunkers sprang into existence and threw out sandy arms to catch his ball, or sudden fissures appeared in the earth in the shape of ditches, or contrary winds blew the ball into the varied positions commonly grouped together in a golfer's mind under the heading 'trouble.' And in the end—which was at the fifteenth—golf had so wrought upon Robert Forshaw's spirit that he would have sold his soul to the evil one—rightly called Old Scratch—to have been allowed to play from the same mark, and he would have thrown in his practice at the Parliamentary Bar as part of the bargain to have had the right to put 'plus two' after his name instead of K.C.

But being a strong man, he merely handed his nephew the ball for which they had played, and announced his intention of strolling on to the club-house, leaving Herbert to finish his round for a seventy, after the manner of the moderns, to whom the recorded card is a greater thing than the game.

And when Robert Forshaw came to the eighteenth tee he saw before him the bunker that had ruined the record of the Professor. There it stood as Taliesin Jones had chanted of it in his bardic way: 'the old sand giant, open-mouthed, yawning to the skies, lying in the path of the weary hero who seeks to lie at rest on the home green.'

'Caddie, make me a tee,' said Robert Forshaw. 'I must try this drive.'

And he did try it, as many a better player than himself has tried it and with a like result, for the ball hit the top of the bank and fell down into the sandy abyss out of sight.

'Take the clubs along to the club-house,' he said with resignation, 'and I will fetch the ball.'

He walked down into the bunker, admiring its grand proportions and the cunning way it spread to right and left in sound defence of the line of attack. Down below there were many footmarks, the signs of the conflict of others that had failed, at which Robert chuckled sympathetically; but where was the ball? 'It must have fallen about here,' he said to himself, 'and rolled down this way; it cannot be far off.'

And, as he said afterwards, it was quite by accident he saw it, for his eyes caught the noble colour of the deep blue mountains against the tender saffron of the dry grass, and as he turned to look along the bunker to the north there was his ball, slowly rolling by itself away from him. He hurried after it, and only when he

came quite near to it did he see that it was being rolled away by a little Brownie scarcely twice the height of the ball, who was dressed in a tight-fitting russet suit, nearly the colour of the golden sand, and was wearing a green cap shaped like a shamrock leaf.

'This won't do, young man!' shouted Forshaw.

The Brownie stopped, out of breath and panting, and gazed upwards in terror. He threw himself on his little knees, clasped his little hands, and shouted in a tender treble agony, 'Spare me! Oh, man-mountain, spare me! and I will grant you your heart's desires.'

The phrase 'man-mountain' reminded Forshaw, who knew little or nothing of English literature, of a story-book of his youth which he had firmly believed to be true when he was fourteen. Now he knew that it was true.

'The matter wants a bit of consideration, my young friend,' said Forshaw, leaning down to look at him carefully. 'It is really compounding a felony, I believe, though I know very little of criminal law.'

And that the matter might receive the further consideration that it appeared to deserve, Forshaw, K.C., took his seat on the sandy bottom of the bunker at the eighteenth, and, picking up the Brownie, perched him on the top of the left boot of his outstretched leg and gave him leave to open his defence.

'Do you know what insomnia is?' asked the Brownie, with a frightened sob.

Hearing that Robert Forshaw knew very well what it was, he took heart and continued.

'I can't sleep,' he whimpered. 'I can't sleep, and I've invented a new feather bed. It's to be made of an old sack loosely stuffed with lots of rubber-cored golf balls, and you will jump down on top of it and sink down amongst them and snuggle into the middle of them, and they will murmur songs of the love of the links to you till you grow dromy and vanish into dreams. Think of it!'

Robert Forshaw tried to think of it. But it seemed to his prose mind utterly uncomfortable.

'All the same,' he replied, 'I don't see why you should have my golf ball.'

'But I'll give you value for it,' said the Brownie. 'Value! You shall have your heart's desires!'

'What are those, do you think?' asked Forshaw, shaking his head at him doubtfully.

'A long drive—say two hundred yards.'

'Make it fifty more,' said Forshaw, 'and I'll give you your preamble—I mean the ball.'

'Well, two hundred and fifty then.'

'Straight and regular?' asked Forshaw.

'Eighteen to the round,' replied the Brownie promptly.

'As good as Herbert's?'

'The very same; and I'll throw in an appetite like his too.'

'Ha!' said Forshaw, his eye lightening up. 'You couldn't promise me youth and good looks too, I suppose?'

'I could promise you anything,' said the Brownie, with simple honesty; 'but I can perform these things I have offered, if you will have them on the regular terms.'

'And what are those?' asked Forshaw.

'Bring your golf ball here at sunset this afternoon and see for yourself.'

The Brownie winked at him merrily, and, turning a back somersault off the toe of his boot, landed lightly on the sand, and ran like an ousel across the bunker to a rabbit hole in the side of it and disappeared.

Robert Forshaw rubbed his eyes, picked up himself and the ball, and walked off to the club-house.

'I wonder if that really happened?' he said to himself. 'I have half a mind to come back at sunset and see if he is there again. But I must get rid of Herbert.'

Herbert some ten minutes afterwards arrived at the eighteenth tee. He wanted a four to do a seventy. His first round on the Llandudno links and a seventy! It was a supreme moment.

That the same fate should dog both their drives could only, one would think, occur in folk-lore, or at least romance; but true it is that the bright visions of a seventy were topped into the bunker and faded from Herbert's eyes, which perchance he had kept on the visions instead of the ball.

He rushed into the bunker, but nowhere was the ball visible, so after a few moments' searching he sent his caddie back to the club-house to tell his uncle he had lost a ball and would follow as soon as he had found it. He had nearly given up the ball as lost when he suddenly noticed it at the far end of the bunker, rolling away from him uphill. There seemed nothing strange to him in this, nor did he experience any shock of surprise when he got near the ball to find that the motor power behind it was a one-horse

baby Brownie such as Cruikshank loved to draw. Herbert picked him up tenderly between his finger and thumb and placed him, kicking and panting, on his left palm, and gazed at him with awe and admiration.

'So you are really a Brownie?' he said.

'I sha'n't be,' said the little chap, clinging on to Herbert's finger; 'I sha'n't be, if you let me drop from this terrible height; and I can't hang on much longer; I'm getting dizzy as it is.'

'I'm sorry,' said Herbert, putting him gently back on to the sand, 'but, you see, I was so excited to find you. I always knew there were real Brownies, but you are the first I have ever seen.'

'And I always knew there were real human beings,' grumbled the Brownie; 'but it's real bad luck to run up against two in one day, especially when one is collecting——'

'Collecting!' said Herbert. 'I call it stealing.'

'Call it what you like,' said the Brownie fiercely, his treble voice running up an angry scale. 'Who stole our sand-hills? Who made a railway up Snowdon? Call it war! Call it revenge! Call it what you like! I call it collecting, and so do the Income Tax people.'

'Well, well, then, collecting,' said Herbert. 'But why should you collect golf balls?'

'Do you ever find a difficulty in getting up in the morning?' asked the Brownie confidentially.

Herbert laughed assent.

'So do I,' said the Brownie, 'and my mother thinks a mattress stuffed with golf balls will cure me.'

'I should think it might,' said Herbert drily, 'but I'm afraid I can't contribute,' and he placed his hand on the ball.

'Wait a moment,' said the Brownie. 'When I can't collect a thing, I pay for it. What do you want for it?'

'What could you give me?' asked Herbert.

'I could give you your heart's desires, if I knew what they were.'

'They are soon told,' said Herbert. 'I want my uncle's wealth and abilities; not to use them as he does, of course, but I want them. Can you give me his position in the world?'

'At once?' asked the Brownie.

'At once,' replied Herbert; 'for, to tell the truth, there is the most charming girl at Llanfihangel——'

'I know—I know,' interrupted the Brownie rather sadly.

'The ways of the world are different from our ways. We have to earn our wives as Jacob earned Rachel. Nowadays I hear of you young people that the less you earn the more you get married.'

'Don't you see,' continued Herbert, 'that if I had my uncle's position I could give Connie everything she wanted?'

'Then why doesn't she marry your uncle?' said the Brownie, with a grin. 'However, what you ask is simple enough, and I will do it and earn the golf ball. Let us meet here at sunset.'

'I will be here,' said Herbert; and he picked up the ball and walked away to the club-house.

Now, the pickled herrings at the Gogarth Abbey Hotel are thought by golfing gourmets to add qualities of strength and direction to the afternoon putting that no other form of food exactly supplies. A golfing professor—not Taliesin Jones—says that it is the phosphorus on the waves at night when the fish are caught that accounts for it. Be this as it may, Forshaw's appetite showed signs of returning, and he ate two of them and pronounced them good. Other things followed; so many, indeed, that after the Stilton, Forshaw's appetite had a relapse.

It was then he suggested they should not play a second round, and uncle and nephew agreed to smoke on the verandah, which you may do on many a winter afternoon in this glorious climate. They sat for an hour or more looking at the glorious purple hills and following the chariot of the sun as it journeyed homeward along their crests.

Neither spoke much, for neither liked to speak about the one thing nearest his thought. It is often so with human silence. The great truth, what everyone knows to be essential, that is rarely spoken between men. There is a barrier of shyness and the fear of ridicule that shuts many of us out of the garden with the golden apples. It was therefore with great joy that Herbert heard his uncle announce his intention of walking across the links to have another look at the eighteenth bunker.

There was no one about when they reached the bunker. They peered into its depths with suppressed excitement, seeing nothing but a vast crater of sand. Then, as of one mind, they stepped over the edge, and as they plunged lower into the depths of it the sun began to sink the quicker and became a mere golden disc against the dark brow of Penmaenmawr.

'It is sunset,' said Herbert, staring into the shadows.

'And there he is!' cried Robert Forshaw excitedly.

'You, too, have seen him, then?' said his nephew, clutching him by the arm. 'Where is he?'

'There!' shouted the older man, with the glee of a child. 'On the grass path. He is calling to us. What is he shouting?'

'He is calling to us to hurry! hurry! hurry!' replied his nephew. And they hurried.

And the way of it, as Professor Taliesin Jones got it from each of them for his communication to the Folk-lore Society, was after this fashion. The Brownie tore along at a mad rate, shouting to them to 'Hurry! hurry! hurry!' The two of them followed, Herbert leading. Away went the Brownie up and down sand-hills and through acres of star-grass, still shouting 'Hurry! hurry! hurry!' And whether they grew smaller or the Brownie bigger never seemed clear to them afterwards. Certain it was that the star-grass they struggled through was the height of pampas-grass and was waving above their heads when they stepped out on to a little clearing before an oak door in the side of a rock-cliff, guarded by a Brownie policeman, and on the door, painted in white letters, were the words 'The Court of Changery.'

'Fees here,' said the Brownie, 'for I leave you.'

They each gave him a golf ball, and immediately the policeman pushed them through the door into a corridor, calling on them to 'Hurry! hurry! hurry!'

No sooner were they inside the door than they heard echoing shouts of 'Forshaw *versus* Forshaw! Forshaw *versus* Forshaw!' and they were pushed and hustled from passage to passage until they found themselves in a court presided over by a little Brownie judge in a wig and gown, before whom appeared an array of Brownie counsel, jurymen, and reporters.

Robert stood up on one side of the judge and Herbert on the other. The Brownie associate called out 'Forshaw *versus* Forshaw.'

'I appear for the plaintiff,' said a little Brownie counsel, with a bow.

'And I for the defendant,' said another.

'Then shut up!' said the judge sternly.

'As your lordship pleases,' said both counsel, smiling amiably.

'But I say——' protested Robert Forshaw.

'No you don't!' said the judge angrily. 'You appear by counsel, and I've listened patiently to all they have to say, and my lunch is getting cold. I make the usual consent order.'

'As your lordship pleases,' said both counsel, bowing and smiling. 'With costs?'

'Costs out of the estate,' snapped out the judge. 'Read the order.'

He fell back in his chair and closed his eyes whilst the little associate read the order in a thin, dry, rapid voice. It was a lengthy document to the effect that Robert Forshaw, K.C., barrister-at-law, of No. 10 King's Bench Walk, Temple, in consideration of a grant of youth, a new appetite, and a two hundred and fifty yards' drive, these being his heart's desires, took over his nephew's personality with all his faults of temper, incapacity for earning money and existing love affairs whatsoever.

'Stop there!' cried Forshaw, K.C., startled at the word 'love.' 'This wants further consideration.'

'You can't have further consideration in a Court of Chancery,' said the judge, waking up and smiling at Forshaw's ignorance. 'You should consider things before you go to law, or afterwards when you get the bill of costs. If we began to consider things here we should never get our work done. You should come here ready to do business. If you want to change places, change places. If you don't, let me get to my lunch.'

'But do you mean to say,' said Robert Forshaw, 'if I want to drive a long ball and have an appetite like Herbert's that I've got to take on all his personality?'

'And do you really mean,' cried Herbert aghast, 'that if I am to have money and power I have to take on my uncle's—well, drawbacks?'

'You've hit it, young man,' said the judge. 'A Court of Chancery is a Court of Equity. You want money and power, and your uncle wants health and youth, much of which he might have retained if he had not been so greedy of money and good living. You each go about envying each other and crying aloud, "Why am I not rich like my uncle? Why am I not young like my nephew?" These are your hearts' desires. Now, equity says you can obtain relief, but you must take the burdens as well as the benefits of what you desire. Don't waste the time of the court any more. I shall confirm the order.'

Robert looked at Herbert and Herbert at Robert. The judge looked at his watch.

'What do you say, my boy?' asked Robert.

'I don't think it is good enough, uncle.'

'No one ever did,' chuckled the judge. And he gathered up his robes and bolted through a little door at the back of the Bench, and a faint but pleasant odour of grilled mutton chop stole across the emptying court.

And coming to the hotel, they found the Professor had arrived to join them for a few days' holiday. And after dinner, when they told him their story, he being a Welshman marvelled not at all, but only rallied them on their faint-heartedness.

'Nevertheless,' he said, 'I am glad for some things that you have remained as you are, for to-morrow I am expecting as my guest a young lady, the daughter of my oldest and dearest friend.'

Herbert blushed.

'You are quite right, Herbert. It is Connie.'

Robert Forshaw remembered with a smile the wording of the order in the Court of Changery.

'And when I have introduced you to the young lady,' said the Professor, 'then, Forshaw, I want you to be the good fairy to these young people, for you can do much to grant them their hearts' desires, which I believe are hopelessly involved in Changery.'

'And so Herbert is to have his heart's desires after all,' said Robert Forshaw, with a mock sigh. 'And what is to become of me?'

'You and I,' said the Professor, placing his hand gently on his friend's shoulder, 'you and I are going to stay here and play golf until you can return to London with an appetite—a real Welsh appetite.'

EDWARD A. PARRY.

DID BROWNING WHISTLE OR SING?

IN the city where I chance to live, among women of leisure it is a popular form of philanthropy—or of amusement, if you are uncharitable enough to call it so—to teach English to the Japanese youth who seek our western shore in such numbers. On one occasion a friend of mine who was thus engaged asked a group of boys to write a composition on poetry. Among the efforts was the following: 'Poetry you are my very dear friend. I am understand the natural of you, and generate my idle spirit to your ability.' That poetry is *my* very dear friend I am certain, but when I see how my estimates of it differ from those of others, I feel sure either that I do not understand its 'natural' or that they do not. I prefer to think the latter.

I had this forcibly brought home the other day when my friend the psychologist, with whom I have many congenial interests, fell to criticising the crudity of Browning's verse, contending that ideas, great in themselves, were left to shift as best they might, and to hobble along on any chance crutch that their impatient and improvident author might whittle out for them.

I fancy that this idea is the prevailing one, and yet the more that I study Browning's verse, the more convinced I am that he was one of our great masters of technique, a metrician of consummate skill.

The other day I asked a little fellow who is being reared on Stevenson's 'Child Verses' to tell me what a poem is. He replied: 'Oh, it's something that isn't true, but you all wish it was true, and that is put in nice jolly words.' This is a very good popular definition, and I commend it to the lexicographers as an improvement. But for a scientific definition I would choose the one formulated by Professor Bradley in his inaugural lecture. 'An actual poem,' he says, 'is the succession of experiences—sounds, images, thoughts, emotions—through which we pass when we are reading as poetically as we can. Of course,' he adds, 'this imaginative experience—if I may use the phrase for brevity—differs with every reader and every time of reading; a poem exists in innumer-

able degrees. But that insurmountable fact lies in the nature of things and does not concern us now.' In other words, the actual poem is the poem operative, just as the actual flower is the sum of emotions, sensations, and thoughts that are stimulated by it. Whatever truth they may claim when objectively interpreted, subjectively the beautiful verses of Alfred Noyes upon the rose are profoundly true, for the rose is realised only in that fineness of sensation that our spiritual heritage makes possible to us :

What does it take to make a rose,
 Mother mine ?
 The God that died to make it knows
 It takes the world's eternal wars,
 It takes the moon and all the stars,
 It takes the might of heaven and hell
 And the everlasting love as well,
 Little child.

Now it may be declared a corollary to Professor Bradley's definition, may it not, that a poem is great in proportion to the liveliness of the experience that it occasions in the cultivated mind, in proportion to its compelling power over the imagination. If the poem absolutely engages one for the time being, lifts him out of himself, carries him to its own enchanted realms, and never once allows him to recall that he is not in the land of reality but of dreams, then it is a great poem.

I think it is conclusive that such an experience can only be derived from a poem in which there is complete correspondence between the thought and the form, for the slightest failure in such correspondence is at once felt, and destroys the illusion. Wherever such disparity exists, it is either the result of insincerity, in which case the poet has been self-consciously indulging in fine writing and wishes to give his composition a splendour that the thought does not warrant, or else it results from the attempt to express a thought that has not yet taken clear form in the author's own mind. Wherever a poet has firm grasp upon an idea, and earnestly desires to communicate it, the thought and the form are fused—are, in fact, merely aspects of the same thing. As Faust replies to the nagging pedant :

Clear wit and sense
 Suggest their own delivery ;
 And if thou'rt moved to speak in earnest,
 What need that after words thou yearnest ?

Yes, your discourses, with their glittering show,
Where ye for men twist shredded thought like paper,
Are unrefreshing as the winds that blow
The rustling leaves through chill autumnal vapour.¹

This true relation of thought and form is explained by the nature of the medium through which poetry expresses itself. In the course of one of the earlier chapters of 'Modern Painters' (I., 2, 1, 7, 20) the author has this to say of the relation of style to subject-matter: 'What is usually called the style or manner of an artist is, in all good art, nothing but the best means of getting at the particular truth which the artist wanted; it is not a mode peculiar to himself of getting at the same truths as other men, but the *only* mode of getting the particular facts he desires, and which mode, if others had desired to express those facts, they also must have adopted. All habits of execution persisted in under no such necessity, but because the artist has invented them, or desires to show his dexterity in them, are utterly base; for every good painter finds so much difficulty in reaching the end he sees and desires that he has no time nor power left for playing tricks on the road to it; he catches at the easiest and best means he can get; it is possible that such means may be singular, and then it will be said that his style is strange; but it is not a style at all, it is the saying of a particular thing in the only way in which it possibly can be said.' If this is true in painting, it must be doubly true in such an art as poetry, which is forced to express itself through symbols. Words are the symbols of ideas, and every word is surrounded by a certain distinctive atmosphere, which is to be distinguished from the atmosphere that radiates from its closest synonym. To define this atmosphere may defy the powers of the most versatile and subtle lexicographer, but it is felt by every sensitive mind, even when so delicate as to elude definition. A word is the key to an exclusive treasure-house, which it alone can unlock. It is a servant that has been trained to one particular duty, quite outside the province or the powers of another. It is a citizen of the world that has ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes, and that bears the evidence of all this contact. It is, in short, a highly-developed, unmistakable personality.

Just as words have this unique character, this inviolable individuality, so also do the combinations of words into sentences or phrases, so that even a simple expression such as 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills' can never be adequately paraphrased.

¹ *Faust*, scene i., tr. of Bayard Taylor.

We are often reminded of this in translation, and regard the happiest version as merely approximate. Thus it is simply beyond the power of our language to give quite the experience that is occasioned by the simple German line 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott,' and so sympathetic a translator as Bayard Taylor despaired of finding English words to reproduce the sentiment and tenderness of Margaret's unaffected 'Ich werde Zeit genug an euch zu denken haben.'

Though the majority of words are symbols arbitrarily chosen, there are yet many onomatopoeic or *mood* words, and words not in themselves onomatopoeic may be so combined as to constitute onomatopoeic phrases. Students have sometimes asked me why Arnold chose Dante's beautiful line

In la sua volontade è nostra pace

as the test of high poetry, and I have never been able fully to explain it to them; nor can they ever understand it until they have a feeling for the language in which the line was written, for the long 'ah' sound in *la, sua, volontade, nostra, and pace* suggests not only the wrapt contemplation of the warrior who has gained this citadel after a long day-weary struggle, but much that must ever elude definition. Originally onomatopoeic words were directly imitative, and not arbitrary symbols; but with the passing of time these words also have assumed a definite intellectual content, until their present atmosphere is a complex of meaning and of sound which renders them doubly secure from possibility of substitution.

That the subject-matter of a poem and its technique are not merely two separate elements that combine in the poem can be practically demonstrated by anyone who interrogates his own experiences in reading poetry. Thus if I read Arnold's 'Self-dependence' as *poetically* as I can, demanding of mind and heart that they co-operate in inducting me into the poet's experience, I do not enjoy the thought as one thing and the sound as another, but I enjoy one in the other; and this thought would not, could not, be the same thought if it were couched in any other words. The thought is these words.

If I wish to realise the substance of the poem, but have forgotten the words, I can only so realise it by turning again to the words. Moreover, I cannot decompose the poem into two mutually distinct elements. I may, indeed, deliberately depart from poetic experience, perform an arbitrary and artificial analysis, and consider the thought and the form as if they had separate existence;

but I do this only that I may enter a second time, and more fully, into that poetic experience that is enjoyed when the thought is fully received in its own inimitable words, which are its flesh and blood. So I may discuss the features of a face and its expression independently, but they do not exist independently.

To be sure, one may enjoy the sound of musical verse even when one is not following the thought. Thus the rich music of Swinburne's verse charms one for a little time—though for *only* a little time—even when one has resigned the effort to wrest any tangible meaning from the lines. But this experience is of short duration and of a distinctly lower order. One could enjoy listening to the Chinese Swinburne, if it is good form to have Swinburnes in China, for about fifteen minutes.¹

And now as to Browning's poetry; is it sincere, does it secure that tenacious hold on the imagination that only the faithful expression of great thoughts and feelings can give? One can only answer with certainty as to one's own experience, though I fancy that no one who has satisfied himself of the meaning of one of Browning's shorter poems—and one may include most of the longer ones—will feel inclined to deny that the subsequent *poetical* reading was a very lively imaginative experience; indeed, that the moving quality in Browning's poetry is rather greater than that of any other English poet since Shakespeare.

So complete is the fusion of subject-matter and form in Browning's poems that I can call to mind but few lines that violate the tone of the poem or the spirit of the context, that disenchant one and recall him from the imaginative experience.

It may be objected that in general Browning deals with themes that are not legitimate for poetic treatment—themes, for example, of so psychological a character that one has to give a careful preliminary study to determine the thought of a poem before he can read it *poetically*. That introduces quite another question, and one that merits separate consideration. At present the only concern is with the declaration that, the themes of the poems being such as they are, in much the greater part of the poetry the technique is virtually above reproach.

Wherever the form is defective—as in parts of 'Paracelsus,' for example—I think it will be found that of necessity the substance is likewise defective, that the poet was striving for the definition

¹ Cf. Professor Bradley's inaugural lecture, *Art for Art's Sake*, on this whole question of form and substance.

of his thought, and could not draw it beyond or out of a somewhat nebulous state.

I fancy that much of the criticism of Browning's metre and language has arisen from the fact that readers have missed that flowing quality, that tranquil and evident melodiousness, that they have been accustomed to associate with the lyric. For much lyrical verse that quality is right—indeed, inevitable. For most of Browning's verse, however, it would be absolutely fatal—as incongruous as a pastoral costume on Wall Street or Piccadilly. Keats and Tennyson usually wrote in a mood of gentle reflection, inclining to pensiveness; Browning was busy with hearts that beat hard and brains that tick high-blooded. It is well known that Tennyson held that poetry should be chanted, and was fond of thus rendering his own verse. One might as well try to chant Bernard Shaw or the dictionary as much that Browning wrote. Fancy the result if one were to try to harness to a chant the dashing realism of the following description of a Florentine square:

That memorable day
(June was the month, Lorenzo named the square)
I leaned a little and overlooked my prize
By the low railing round the fountain-source
Close to the statue, where a step descends:
While clinked the cans of copper, and stooped and rose
Thick-ankled girls who brimmed them, and made place
For marketmen glad to pitch basket down,
Dip a broad melon-leaf that holds the wet,
And whisk their faded fresh. And on I read
Presently, though my path grew perilous
Between the outspread straw-work, piles of plait
Soon to be flapping, each o'er two black eyes
And swathe of Tuscan hair, on festas fine:
Through fire-irons, tribes of tongs, shovels in sheaves,
Skeleton bedsteads, wardrobe-drawers agape,
Rows of tall slim brass lamps with dangling gear,—
And worse, cast clothes a-sweetening in the sun:
None of them took my eye from off my prize.

As well try to fancy Falstaff in a *coranto*. Perhaps this is not legitimate material for poetry; but if it is to be treated, Browning has done it to the life. I once asked an artist friend why he was so pleased with his portrait of a dark-eyed girl of France looking through a door that stood slightly ajar. After a moment's hesitation he said, with a little gesture of impatience, 'Oh, she's looking at you.' So with this description of the square. Doubtless this particular place *could* be described in chantable verse—as Long-

fellow essayed the Belfry of Bruges, much to its detriment—but not without sacrificing the atmospheric effect that Browning's sense of things dictated, not without a fatal change in mood and temper. The whole description is rightly keyed; there is not a jarring note in it. It is relentlessly right—the thing itself.

Indeed, so unerring is Browning's sense of verse propriety that a discordant note, a line out of character, is hardly to be met. I venture that there are more verses that impair the evenness of tone-impression in Tennyson's 'Guinevere,' lauded as it is, than in an equal number of pages of Browning. Such unfortunate verses as :

He, reverencing King's blood in a bad man.

Stammering and staring. It was their last hour.

These prosaic lines are highly injurious to a poem bathed with the atmosphere of dreamy romance.

That Browning was a master of musical verse, and employed it when justified by the theme, no understanding reader of 'Abt Vogler,' 'Saul,' 'A Woman's Last Word,' the lyrics in 'Paracelsus,' or 'Love among the Ruins' will question. Where shall one turn for verse to excel the pastoral effect of the following lines from 'Saul'?

And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for, lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us—so blue and so far!

How perfect! The very movement of a flock of sheep has been caught, and the pervasive twilight tenderness of pastoralism. If this has ever been surpassed, it is by the corresponding description in 'Love among the Ruins':

Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half asleep
Tinkle homeward through the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop . . .

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray
Melt away . . .

The metre of this poem is indeed a triumph, capable one moment of giving these liquid effects and the next of depicting the abrupt and breathless staccato movements of the lovers :

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
 Waits me there
 In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
 For the goal,
 When the king looked where she looks now, breathless, dumb,
 Till I come . . .
 When I do come, she will speak not ; she will stand,
 Either hand
 On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
 Of my face,
 Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
 Each on each.

Conformable to my general thesis that the substance and the form of Browning's poetry are vitally inwrought, I think it will be found that in the more exalted poems there is a majestic and complex music that is virtually unique in our poetry, and that differs from the music of the more attenuated lyric as a symphony differs from a simple and evident melody. Browning once compared himself to Beethoven, and the comparison holds, for such a poem as 'Abt Vogler' is Beethovenesque in its vast and tranquillising harmony, in its nobly sustained, yet nobly restrained, passion.

That Browning's verse is so often unmusical is due not to a dull ear or to carelessness, but to the character of his themes. So universal was his interest in humanity that it ranged from Caliban, trying to articulate his embryonic affinities with mankind, to little David, seated between the gnarled knees of Saul, with the light of Heaven's revelation streaming upon his golden hair, and the Pope,

Heart-sick at having all his world to blame.

For all this vast range of characters intensely dramatic situations are conceived, and Browning knew—whether he ever gave the matter a moment's conscious thought or not—that his diction must be as varied as the characters, properly to reveal them. The angular old lawyer must deliver himself in the angular terminology of his profession ; the grotesque pedant must sputter like an antique worn-out gargoyle ; the sin-shattered, dying bishop must break forth in half-coherent bursts of diseased language, as truly as the white-souled Pompilia must use diction that is like 'flowers held up to the softened gaze of God.' One may question, if one chooses, the poetical propriety of many of Browning's characters and

situations; but given the characters and the situations, I do not see how one can well quarrel with the diction. Just as Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti defied the traditions of the Academy in order that they might escape from the tyranny of dreary languor, insipid prettiness, and trite convention, so Browning chose to write verse that shocked the ears of a generation trained in like poetic traditions. And we get his own gloss upon this departure in rousing words:

Rough, brave old Martin Luther
 Bloomed fables, flowers and furze,
 The better, the uncouthier;
 Do roses stick like burrs?

Rather than to be censured, Browning's verse is to be admired for its plasticity and the infinitely varied effects secured. Its suppleness is brilliantly illustrated in the little poem 'Meeting at Night,' which combines description, used for setting and atmosphere, with stirring action:

The gray sea and the long black land;
 And the yellow half-moon large and low;
 And the startled little waves that leap
 In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
 As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
 And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
 Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
 A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
 And a blue spurt of a lighted match—
 And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,
 Than the two hearts beating each to each!

The two opening verses move very slowly, the sounds all being kept in the minor, to give a tranquil evening effect—sea, sky, and land all nicely toned—and to suggest the long, quiet crossing of the bay. Then follow four sharp, nervous verses that leap forth and break abruptly into this dream, as the beaching of the boat quickens the pulse of the lover. Then two verses that so move as to suggest a quick, regular walk; then onomatopoetic phrases to suggest the tap at the pane and the scratching of the match, and then a superb pause before the final verses that consummate the little drama. All this is very great art—verse that observes every slightest shading in the mood.

This perfect correspondence between the movement of the verse and the action described is well-nigh invariable with Browning,

and shows how masterly was his technique. Recall the lines in 'Pippa Passes' in which the sinful Ottima, to regain control of her lover, is picturing the occasion of their first fond amour :

Buried in woods we lay, you recollect ;
 Swift ran the searching tempest overhead ;
 And ever and anon some bright white shaft
 Burned through the pine-tree roof, here burned and there,
 As if God's messenger through the close wood screen
 Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
 Feeling for guilty thee and me ; then broke
 The thunder like a whole sea overhead.

The swift gathering of the storm, the hurtling shafts of fire, the dreadful pause, and then the sea-vast breaking of the thunder are reproduced with terrible faithfulness. Finally, recall the unique description of a sunrise that opens the same poem, wherein the rising of the orb is compared to a golden liquor that boils over the brim of a vessel :

Day !
 Faster and more fast,
 O'er night's brim, day boils at last :
 Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
 Where spurting and suppressed it lay,
 For not a froth-flake touched the rim
 Of yonder gap in the solid gray
 Of the eastern cloud, an hour away ;
 But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
 Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
 Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
 Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.

How completely the movement of the verse tallies with the successive steps in the brilliant pageant !

Browning himself was not unmoved by the charges brought against his verse and the facile prophecies that his prestige would be short-lived, and in 'Pacchiarotto' he takes occasion—good fighter that he was—to have it out with his critics. He represents them as chimney-sweeps who come ostensibly to clean his flues, but actually bringing in more dirt than they remove. The pestiferous fellows are busy gossiping about him, declaring that his was

No ear ! or, if ear, so tough-gristled—
 He thought that he sung while he whistled.

They

Make mouths at the Tenant, hoot warning !
 You'll find him decamped next May morning.

But the poet, who overhears them, retorts that his house is

freehold, by grace of the grand Lord
Who lets out the ground here—my landlord :
To him I pay quit-rent—devotion ;

and then he makes his prophecy, that people up and down the street will be listening to his singing long after these meddlesome fellows have taken to their heels :

Nor hence shall I budge, I've a notion ;
Nay, here shall my whistling and singing
Set all the street's echoes a-ringing
Long after the last of your number
Has ceased my front-court to encumber
While, treading down rose and ranunculus,
You *Tommy-make-room-for-your-Uncle us !*

And the prophecy is coming true, for curious heads are popping out at fresh windows every day, and the music has not only echoed through the street where it was composed, but has reverberated to neighbouring streets and squares. And while some red-cotton night-caps are still wagging in solemn disapproval, wadding in ears and noses erect, other heads are bobbing in right good time with the music. *De te, fabula !*

F. M. PADELFOED.

Go
us
and
But
foot
the
or t
any
not
thin
a st
to t
har
loan
with
othe
eye
croo
worl
chat
our
gain
woul
shee
at h
farm
and
atta
said,
one
stag
'
'We
Read

THE MIND OF THE RUSTIC.

Good people who live within the sound of Bow Bells consider us village folk a very ignorant race. We are not half so sharp and intelligent as our neighbours who live in towns—so they say ! But we know better than that. We are slow of speech, slow of foot, and our thoughts do not come quite so quickly as those of the poor fellows who work in factories ; but ‘we know a thing or two,’ and I would back our rustic wit and cleverness against any town-bred creature who has to slave in a mill and knows nothing of ploughing and sowing, reaping and mowing. These things require intellect. You cannot guide a plough as you would a steam-driven machine which always does as it is told. You have to think of the state of the ground, now saturated with rain, now hard with a slight frost, or with drought, or it is hard clay or soft loam. Your ploughs vary. With some you can crack your jokes with your neighbour and stare about and watch the rooks : while others are such kittle-kattle plaguey things that if you take your eye off them they are bound to go wrong, and your furrow is as crooked as a Devonshire lane. All these varied conditions of work make us pretty shrewd and not mechanical dunces and chattering numskulls like factory folk. Besides we have to sell our stock, and this makes us very keen and clever in making bargains. You would have to get up very early in the morning if you would take us in, or try to cheat us over the price of a horse or a sheep. Some years ago the son of a neighbouring squire when at home for the Eton holidays was walking through his sire’s farmyard, and noticed a horse give two or three desperate plunges, and then throw itself down, overturning the cart to which it was attached. The old bailiff limped up leaning upon his stick and said, ‘I tell ye what it be ; we shall have a rum game with she one of these days. This is the third time she’s had them mad staggers. I tell ye what it be ; we must sell she.’

‘But John, who’ll buy her ?’ asked the squire’s son.

‘Lor’ bless you, sir, ther’s plenty of fools about,’ replied John. ‘We’ll try she at auction, and if she don’t go, we’ll send she to Reading fair.’

A few months later John was asked what had become of the mare. A twinkle appeared in the old man's eye as he told the following story :—' Well, we tried she at auction, down the village, but them 'ere plaguey boys had been a talking, and bless ye they was as shy as hawks—wouldn't bid at all 'cept 'twas old Josey the blacksmith ; he made a bidding of thirty-five shillings. So I took she home, and blowed she out with mashes ; and come fair day I had her tail plaited up, and her mane done with ribbons, and she stepped up just about. Well, some of the coves was *main deedy*,¹ and wouldn't look at she, but I says to Jimmy for to keep a walking she about, and he and she stepped up proud 'mongst t'other horses. There was a cove there as I seed was looking shy at she ; so I takes no notice of he, but I gets a friend, and says to he, " Now if you wants a reglar useful mare at plough, harrow, or what not, you buy she. She ain't quite our pattern ; so I shall sell she, if I gets nigh her value." So when I was gone this cove goes to Jimmy and says he, " Her eyes ain't right." " Hain't they ? " says Jimmy ; " then mine ain't, nor you'n neither." And so they talks a bit, and he says, " Is she a good collar'd un ? " " Out and out," says Jimmy, "*Goes till she drops*"—which was real truth. So in the afternoon the cove comes to me and says, " Master Holt, how about that mare ? I know she's the worsted feet I ever see," and he kep on just about she, first one thing and then t'other ; and so we got a bargaining, and I sold she to him for twenty-four pounds. The cove hadn't had she long before some one peached, and he comes in a fine way to me saying he was reglar stuck ; but finding as 'twasn't no go with me, he says, " Come, Master Holt, you did ought to stand me some brandy and water over this 'ere job."

' I hope you did, John,' said the squire's son.

' Lor' bless you, I didn't,' replied John ; ' I tell you what I says to him, " Now you look here ; if you be such a fool in a fair before you've had brandy and water, what a fool you'll be arter you've had it ? " So I didn't give him none, and left him a going on just about.'

The unblushing shamelessness of the old bailiff is amusing. His logic told him that there are fools in the world whose object in life is to be cheated ; and if anyone was wise enough to take

¹ *Deedy* is Berkshire for careful, wary, or cautious, and *main* is the intensive. very.

them in, he was doing a charitable act and one that was quite praiseworthy.

This John Holt, the Squire's bailiff, was a notable person in the parish, and held the offices of overseer, haywarden, and parish clerk and sexton. Owing to a constant change of vicars, he assumed great authority, and hardly spoke with that reverence of his parson as was quite befitting. He used to say, 'I've had a rum lot to break in and no mistake. Some on 'em's for turning one way in church, and some another. One of 'em's all for hymn singing, and some on 'em for no music. 'Tis my opinion as 'twas a thousand pities as ever we had a organ. Since the old church band was done away with we ain't had so many to church. There's old Martin Wilson, as played the clarnet, 'eve never been since, and old Curten—he was famous at the big fiddle, and so was old Wheeler on his bassoon. I didn't hold with Cook as played the flute. He never were able to keep up with t'others, and throw'd they all behind.'

Unfortunately a very young clergyman came to the parish, and then John did just, and only just, what he liked. A leading dissenter had died, and his wife had named a day to the vicar for the funeral. One fine day in July the funeral procession duly arrived, and the vicar advanced in full canonicals to meet the corpse at the churchyard gate. To his amazement the widow advanced towards him in a perfect fury, shaking her fist in his face and shouting, 'Do you call this religion? Where's his gravie? 'Tis shameful to a poor lone widow. Where's his gravie (grave) I tell you?'

The vicar then for the first time perceived that John the clerk was missing, and that no grave had been prepared. Upon inquiry he was told that John was haymaking in the park. A messenger was dispatched to bring him, and shortly John appeared limping along with a prong in his hand, his shirt sleeves rolled-up to the elbow, his coat upon his arm, and a large straw hat upon his head. He advanced with perfect composure, and when the vicar began to say, 'This is very disgraceful, John,' he replied, 'You bide a bit. I sees what it be. You let me talk to she. She knows me and I knows she.' Then, addressing the widow, he proceeded, 'Now I tell ye what it be; you listen to reason. Now we've had rain, rain, rain; and now we've got a fine day we must make our hay. Now your corpsey, he won't hurt. Comes a wet day, 'taint no odds to you; you bring your umbrellas, but our hay'd spile. Now you

take he home and listen to reason. Your old man he'd a listen'd to reason. Hay's a thing as can't only be made when 'tis fine. 'Taint no odds to corpseys whether 'tis wet or dry.' So completely was the woman convinced by the irresistible logic of John's argument that she was completely subdued, and if the vicar had not insisted upon some of the haymakers being called in to dig the grave, the funeral would have turned home again.

Another rustic tells with glee how he sold some sheep. I will omit the correct Berkshire dialect, as it is a tongue 'not understood of the people,' at least of those refined folk who read these rustic memoirs.

'The best game as ever I had was with some sheep. They was reglar bad uns, when they died, and I couldn't do nothing with them. They weren't no fault to look at particular. Now old Mr. Thomas was noted for his sheep, and in the market got th' outside price. So I takes and marks my sheep with a T just like his was marked, and I gets a drover to take they into market. Presently a dealer spies they out, and so he says to the drover, "What be these?" "Well," he says, "they ain't a first class lot, and ain't equal to that lot you bought of Mr. Thomas." So the dealer he bigins a beating down the drover, who sticks to the price I told him, and says "If I don't get it, I'm ordered to take they home." So after a bit they agrees to price. Well, about a week after, Mr. Thomas gets a letter from the dealer who was in a fine way about how he'd been stuck, and Mr. Thomas he couldn't make head or tail on't, and they've never made it out now. All as I know is as I got seven shillings a head more than ever I should have got, if it hadn't been for that T.'

The mind of the rustic is amazingly endowed with the faculty for making excuses for derelictions of duty. Wonderful ingenuity is shown. The reasons given for not attending church are extraordinary. The causes which prevent the growth of celery or onions, as stated by gardeners, are extremely numerous and varied, but you will clearly understand that no blame can possibly be attached to the gardener. The following story shows the ingenuity of the rustic mind in framing excuses, even when the brain was not in its normal condition. A neighbouring baronet had written a letter to the county newspaper, and desired one of his men, who was going to market on Saturday, to bring him a dozen copies, if the letter appeared in that day's issue. His man, William, was rather the worse for liquor, a condition which was not unusual on market-

day, and completely forgot the commission. The baronet sent for him on his return, and then he recollected it. 'Did the letter appear in to-day's paper, William?' He replied, 'Please, sir, the letter's in right enough.' 'Well then, William, where are the copies I ordered you to bring?' 'Please, sir, I didn't like to bring 'em, *because they were all originals!*' The baronet, perceiving William's unsteady gait, replied, 'William, I'm afraid you've been drinking.' 'No, please, sir,' replied the undaunted William. 'Well,' continued the baronet, 'at any rate one of us is drunk, and I know it is not I.'

In spite of his shrewdness, his cleverness and accurate calculations of the amount due to him for wages, the rustic often falls an easy prey to quacks and impostors. The good gentlemen who undertake to cure all manner of diseases find agricultural labourers some of their best customers. Quack remedies, patent medicines, wonderful oils for curing rheumatism, the bane of the rustic, are eagerly bought, and large sums are wasted out of scant earnings for the purchase of these amazing remedies. I have just seen a most insidious letter written by an American quack to a poor woman who was anxious to obtain a cure for her sick son. This quack has an agent in London who advertises remedies for the disease from which this boy suffers, as well as for many others, and sends a free bottle of medicine. This is followed by a long letter from the American promising to cure the complaint, the cost of the treatment being 3*l.*, but he is obliging enough to say that he will only charge one pound in her case. The sample bottle, he states, was only a tonic, and was not part of the cure, but that if the money be paid, a complete cure will be effected. A ticket for the county hospital happily solved the difficulty, and one pound will not be added to the American quack's receipts. But quacks of other sorts exist nearer home, and some years ago in a neighbouring village a herbalist and astrologist gained a considerable reputation among the poor whom he duped as a 'very clever man.' A poor widow who was suffering from a simple form of ophthalmia had implicit confidence in him, until, getting no better and her funds being exhausted, she reluctantly fell back upon the parish doctor. She told him that she had got the black crab cancer in her eye, and that it was sucking her sight out, and that the wise man had informed her that the stuff to kill this monster would cost 2*l.*, and that what he had done already had much weakened him. A short time and simple remedies put her quite right; but she always maintained that 'twas the

wise man as first pisoned the black crab cancer.' The poor folk had generally a firm belief in his powers, though it would have been difficult to find a single cure that he had effected. A labourer employed in the garden of a neighbouring baronet was dismissed upon strong circumstantial evidence for stealing some forced peaches. He resorted to the wise man, who addressed the following letter to the baronet :

SIR,—By astronomie and calclation of the stars I nows as 'twas nôt Master Savage as took them peaches, but a young man of fair hair for sellen in London which Savage nowed nothink about, and is innozent which I proved three nights with the stars Mercuries and others.

There is a vein of strong superstition that still runs through the rustic mind. A few years ago one of my parishioners came to the rectory to make request for a drop of sacramental wine for a child who had 'the graspings.' After inquiry I discovered that this curious disease was a certain convulsive clutching that showed itself in infants, and was imparted to it before birth by the mother craving for some strong liquor, and that the only cure was a drop or two of the wine used for Holy Communion. This superstition did not receive encouragement.

In the days of my predecessor a widow, Mistress Mary Ann Grout, died, and requested before her decease that the following articles should be placed in her coffin : a snuff-box, umbrella, walking-stick, a three-penny piece, a razor and shaving box. The two last articles were presumably for the use of her husband. It was not an unusual custom to place a coin in the hand of a deceased person to pay toll as he passed into the unseen world. The legend of Charon seems to have been very long lived. I have never heard of such a strange assortment of things deemed essential for the future world as that requisitioned by this old lady, and I expect that this experience is unique. My predecessor told the sorrowing relatives that 'he would have no nonsense,' and the snuff-box, &c., did not find their way into the coffin.

The mind of the rustic is not much exercised by politics. His views are traditional. An aged parishioner and church official is a strong Liberal, because some time ago, he was not sure when, probably at the time of the French wars at the beginning of the last century, the wicked Tories threw some shiploads of wheat into the sea in order to keep up the price of bread. I cannot find this terrible and shameless conduct recorded in any trustworthy chronicle. The political views of the squire were usually quite

good enough for his labourers, but *nous avons changé tout cela*, and the cheap Liberal press, which somehow finds its way into the cottages more readily than Conservative papers, tells the rustic many things which are strange. But he does not always believe them. A red van was going through our village, and a red-hot radical was inveighing against squires and parsons. The rustics were amused and one of them shouted out, 'I wish our passon could hear ye, he'd soon tell ye what he thinks on ye.' 'You see, sir, it were only his manner o' speakin'. It's less trouble for chaps like he to go about spouting than to work hard. It's only his job, so to speak,' he told me afterwards.

Our much respected late member had some curious experiences when canvassing. Calling at the house of a voter he was met by an old woman who said her husband was out, adding, 'You ain't come about the vote have you? Bless you, my dear, 'tain't his vote, though the law gives it him. Bless you, he married me for the vote. This 'ere premises is mine, and he married me for 'em. Now, you slip in and have a talk with me.' On entering the house the candidate was offered by the lady a pinch of snuff, who took a large pinch herself. 'Now, my dear, I hopes as you be one of them as is for taking the tax off of beer. 'Tis shameful how our beer be taxed. There's Wells, our brewer; I told him t'other day, I says, Wells, you did ought to be ashamed about your beer. Why, 'tis all water. It don't a do nobody no good. Why, a pint on it ain't worth havin', because 'tis all water. Yes, I says, Wells, I knowed you when you walked about the town, and now you've got a carriage and pair, and I tells you how you've got it, by waterin' our beer. 'Tis shameful my dear, if you wos to taste it, 'tain't no wirtue in it, because Wells he makes it all of water.'

Our member having assured the old lady that if she would refer to his address she would see that he was in favour of the repeal of the malt tax, she with great warmth exclaimed, 'Bless you, my dear, you shall have the vote. But do stand us a bottle of stout; 'taint Wells', and it does one ever so much good.' Having heard the explanation of the penalties of treating, she continued, 'I aint one of them as tells about nothing; only 'tis shameful of Wells, and so I tells him so 'tis all water.' This would delight the soul of the temperance reformer, and might interest the upholders of the Licensing Bill.

The same member was canvassing a cantankerous farmer, and remarked, 'I dare say you guess the nature of my visit.'

'Tain't likely as I shouldn't,' he rejoined. 'Tain't any time 'cept 'lections as a carriage and pair drives up to my door. Now I'm a man of few words, and if you wants my vote, I'll tell you at once you won't have it.' Our member replied that he only thought it right to call, not only to solicit his vote, but to learn, however much the farmer might differ from him, what his views and desires as regards politics might be. 'Now I'll tell you,' said the farmer; 'be you one of those as be putting on the taxes or taking of them off?' The member replied, 'I am in favour of removing those taxes which press heavily upon industry, as far as the safety and necessities of our country will permit.'

'Be you?' replied the farmer; 'then I be's for putting of them on. 'Tis shameful. Look at my bit of new sown grass. I done it as well as a man could, and put 12*l.* worth of guano upon it, and them plaguey hounds come across it, and 'tis shameful to look at. Now I is for putting a tax of 5*l.* upon all them as goes a hunting in a red coat, and I'd make any as follows 'em pay 1*l.* a year. 'Tis shameful. Look at my fences. Why, they're all gap-ways. Talk of jumping! 'Taint no such thing; 'tis a a running through everything. I was standin' agin my meadow-gate, and hup they comes all of a hurry. "'Hopen the gate, guvner," hollows they. "Shan't," says I, "'tis likely as I'm going to 'ave my heifers slip calf along with your plaguey red-coats to oblige you. No, if you've got 'unting horses jump the fences; and if you ain't, why don't you stop at home?'"

The member expressed regret that the hounds had done so much mischief, and assured him that if he would make his damage known he would find every readiness on the part of the hunt to make it good. After a few words of civility, as the member was leaving, the farmer said, 'Now, I dare say, you'd like to know how I be going to vote; but you won't. No one ever did know yet how I was going to vote, nor ever will, till I be's at the poll.' I rather fancy that he was won by the kindly courtesy of our member, and that he gave to him his vote. Such are some of the difficulties which our members have to contend with when they woo the suffrages of the rustics.

Few farmers share the antipathy of sport with this cantankerous old gentleman, though in these days of agricultural depression not many are able to follow the hounds, as they did in the days of our fathers. They know that hunting means 'good business' for them, and that hunting stables are the best markets for their

corn. They and the labourers also regard the local hunt as a milch cow, whence they can draw compensation for all manner of losses, and the letters and demands which the secretary of the poultry fund daily receives show a large amount of grim and sardonic humour. A heifer, a pig, as well as innumerable cocks, hens and ducks, are among the unfortunate creatures which are said to owe their deaths to the terrible foxes. But the rustic is by nature a keen sportsman ; he loves a day's beating when the pheasants have to be shot, and he would like to hunt on foot, if only he could spare the time and could run a little faster. He requires to be known in order to be appreciated. He bears his troubles, and they are many, with quiet resignation and consummate bravery. He feels deeply, though he is not one who 'wears his heart upon his sleeve,' and may appear to the stranger callous and indifferent. He is suspicious of strangers, and his confidence is not won easily. The stories which I have recorded of him may help to reveal his character, and to show what curious ideas lurk within the rustic mind.

P. H. DITCHFIELD.

A MARTYR FOR STYLE.

THE phrase is Pater's, and the martyr Gustave Flaubert, the French novelist. The evidence of martyrdom is to be sought in the volumes of Flaubert's correspondence, which are full of his groans over the tortures of literary composition. His creed was that out of all the words in the dictionary and all the constructions in the grammars, there was but one right way of saying the thing you had to say. Ready-made phrases were anathema. Like ready-made clothes, they never fitted. Style meant an unwearying search for the unique phrase, an unwinking vigilance to avoid conventional verbiage. It meant, moreover, an equally watchful struggle against assonances and double genitives, not merely because they were clumsy and unmusical, but because clumsy and unmusical phraseology signified, so Flaubert believed, defective conception or inadequate expression. If Flaubert's theory was exacting, his practice was laborious to an almost incredible degree. Maupassant, whom he took for literary apprentice, left a vivid account of the severity of the discipline and of the labours of the master. In letter after letter Flaubert himself tells George Sand or Louise Collet how in eight days he has finished but two pages of his novel, and that only with unheard-of efforts—'toiling like a nigger' is his own phrase—during which exhausted nature from time to time collapsed. A whole book meant six or seven years of this toil, and of work so incessant as to leave no leisure even for a two days' visit to his friend George Sand at Nohant. Such was Flaubert's martyrdom for style.

Pater, in some respects a kindred spirit, took, as we know, this legend of martyrdom in perfect good faith; but an eminent French critic, I am sorry to say, was more sceptical. When Flaubert's correspondence was published, M. Jules Lemaitre made open fun of this tale of woe. Frankly he did not believe a word of it. 'Look,' he cried, 'how Flaubert could write long letters to his friends, twenty pages at a sitting easily and comfortably, and in a pretty elaborate style, too.' The truth was, the sceptic urges, that Flaubert was by nature indolent. Pottering among his books, stretching himself at full length on his sofa, smoking infinite tobacco,

lookin
only j
was w
like a
he h
believ
syllab
of tol
says
but h
the ra
Re
Lema
a pie
confe
a gre
write
of th
He r
how
the h
T
have
glib
no d
easil
denc
has
chat
intim
more
have
and
after
schol
wou
so, k
I
into
amp
writ

looking out of window or dreaming over a page on which he had only just put pen to paper in a vague reverie about epithets, that was what in all good faith he described to his friends as 'toiling like a nigger.' There was a strong element of Tartarin in him; he had a bent for exaggeration. By degrees he came to believe himself in this idea of a tormented struggle with words and syllables, and took the dreamy pursuit of an idea through clouds of tobacco smoke for hard labour. He wrote slowly, no doubt, says our facile *causeur*, and wrote the better for writing slowly; but he was not, as he brought himself to believe, the whole time on the rack with the sweat of agony on his brow.

Reverence, it must be said, is not the strong point of M. Jules Lemaitre. He made his fame by making game of Ernest Renan, a piece of *gaminerie* in criticism for which he afterwards made confession and received absolution. On the other hand, he had a great affection for Flaubert; he loved the man and admired the writer, and was a staunch champion of his fame. If he makes fun of the martyrdom, the laugh is infectious and not ill-natured. He remembered the hours he had himself passed with Flaubert, how glad Flaubert was of company, how loth to let him go, how the hours slipped by in talking literature and turning over books.

That there is a good deal of truth in this friendly chaff I can have no doubt. There is, however, another side to consider. The glib journalist—I use the phrase to emphasise the contrast, meaning no disrespect to M. Lemaitre, who is writer and scholar—cannot easily realise the very real suffering, the difficulties and despondencies, of the shy, lonely, unready writer. M. Lemaitre himself has the happy knack of what is called in French *causerie*. He can chat with the public as easily as Flaubert could talk with his few intimates; he can throw off a *feuilleton* for the papers probably more readily than Flaubert could write a letter. Flaubert would have been as capable of flying over the Seine in his dressing-gown and slippers from his window at Croisset as of talking to the public after M. Lemaitre's fashion. M. Lemaitre is of opinion that a schooling in journalism would have done Flaubert a world of good, would have made his superb style more alert and supple. It may be so, but for good or ill Flaubert had not to submit to the experiment.

Practice or no practice, writers seem to be divided by nature into the opposite kinds of the ready and the unready. For example. Flaubert's friend, George Sand, was the readiest of ready writers, just as he was the unreadiest of the unready. Flaubert,

be it noted, was free from all suspicion of scorn for George Sand's facility. He envied her faculty, and had nothing but admiration for its results. She is always his *chère Maître* in their correspondence. The romances she poured forth with unpremeditated ease filled his fastidious soul with wonder and delight. George Sand on her side marvelled, half incredulous, at Flaubert's lamentable tale of his pains in labour. Observe that George Sand's prose is as good in one way as Flaubert's in another; for the truth is that no law can be laid down beforehand as to which way will produce the best work. It is a question of gift. Readers of Lockhart will remember the anecdote of the unresting pen of Walter Scott, and the regularly falling sheets of manuscript which worried the watching Menzies through the after dinner-hours. That was not Stevenson's notion of composition. Style, according to his ideas, as expounded in his essay on the subject, involved, among other things, a scrupulous balancing of the f's and p's. Stevenson accordingly was once rash enough to say that Scott was hardly in the manful sense an artist at all.¹ Scott is the world's wizard of romance, and Stevenson's own style was singularly good.

Flaubert, unhappily for himself, but in no wise unhappily for the world, appears to have been one of those writers who cannot see the right way for the sentence or paragraph to run until they have written it out a dozen times in the wrong way. Minerva did not spring fully armed from his brain. There was a great deal of trouble to be taken with her between the difficult parturition and the arming with the shining armour. Moreover, as was first revealed by M. Ducamp, in Flaubert's case native unreadiness was aggravated by a nervous disorder. The lucky folk that have the gift of spontaneous eloquence can form no conception of the torment of composition to the writer to whom the right way of saying things comes last, not first. I can well believe with M. Lemaître that half his time Flaubert was pottering among his books or gazing out of window. He suffered none the less for that. He suffered precisely because he could not sit to his task and say straight off what he wanted to say as he wanted to say it. To be weak is miserable, and by no victim is the misery of weakness more keenly felt than by the fastidious and infertile writer. Flaubert himself said that he sometimes hated literature with the hate of the impotent.

If it be granted that he suffered, yet some will hold he

¹ See end of 'A Gossip on Romance' in *Memories and Portraits*.

suffe
wher
and
a m
auth
read
I thi
voice
upon
how
one i
meas
scarc
be di
indiv
have
it en
the b
denie
bidde
for th
and l
their
The
appl
very
much
lectur
that i
and in
would
nor st
and d
railing
self.
insinc
rhetor
should
a simp
writer
' Mode

suffered for a false faith. The average man is apt to suppose that when writers make a fuss about style the result must be affected and insincere, or at least artificial. I heard this view once from a most unlikely quarter. It was at an Oxford lecture by the author of 'Modern Painters.' In the course of his lecture, Ruskin read to us a famous passage from the first chapter of that book. I think I can still hear the eloquent words and the sympathetic voice: 'He who has once stood beside the grave to look back upon the companionship which has been for ever closed, feeling how impotent *there* are the wild love and the keen sorrow to give one instant's pleasure to the pulseless heart, or atone in the lowest measure to the departed spirit for the hour of unkindness, will scarcely for the future incur that debt to the heart which can only be discharged to the dust. But the lesson which men receive as individuals they do not learn as nations. Again and again they have seen their noblest descend into the grave, and have thought it enough to garland the tombstone where they had not crowned the brow, and to pay the honour to the ashes which they had denied to the spirit. Let it not displease them that they are bidden amidst the tumult and the dazzle of their busy lives, to listen for the few voices and watch for the few lamps that God has toned and lighted to charm and to guide them, that they may not learn their sweetness by their silence, nor their light by their decay.' The closing of the book was followed by a spontaneous burst of applause. 'Thank you,' said Ruskin simply. 'That passage was very much applauded when it was first written, and it has been much applauded since, and it was entirely insincere.' And the lecturer went on to explain to his startled and gasping audience that if he had indeed stood beside the grave, his heart full of sorrow and indignation over the popular injustice to the living Turner, he would not have stayed to seek this elaborate antiphony of clauses nor studied to put three d's one after the other in debt, discharge, and dust. The Ruskin of those days was fond of mocking or railing at the sentiments and 'long Hooker sentences' of his earlier self. I tell the story not to accept his plea of guilty on the charge of insincere rhetoric, but to give the plain man the full benefit of the rhetorician's confession. It is perfectly true that a good style should be a natural style. But a natural style is not necessarily a simple style. A good style should be at once natural to the writer and appropriate to his purpose. Ruskin's purpose in 'Modern Painters' was to awaken in minds not readily attuned

to such appeal an emotional realisation of beauty in nature and art. Can it be said that the style was inappropriate to the purpose? At all events it was successful, and it needed no ordinary trumpet to shake the walls of early Victorian philistinism. There are passions, emotions, apprehensions that have never achieved expression except in poetry. Now nobody ventures to blame the poet who takes pains about his verse. If poetry is in a sense artificial it is felt to be in no sense insincere. It has been as a matter of historical fact the first solemn utterance of primitive peoples. Prose for its part has many offices to fulfil, nor are all of these alien to the purposes of poetry. It too has its emotional no less than its logical sphere. The 'other harmony of prose' has its secrets and its laws as potent and subtle as those of verse. There is a place and a need for the ornament of Jeremy Taylor, as there is a place and a need for the direct and nervous simplicity of Jonathan Swift. I remember in a review (not without high critical authority) a complaint of Froude's style, because he did not write like Walter Pater. Conceive the story of the Armada told in the linked sweetness of Pater's more elaborate periods. Equally absurd is it to quarrel with Pater because he did not adopt the prose of historical narrative or familiar conversation to analyse the subtleties of Mona Lisa's smile.

Simple or elaborate, however, the natural style is not always or often the spontaneous style. The spontaneous style is too often the easy writing that makes cursed hard reading. Good style sounds spontaneous, but apparent spontaneity is the last refinement of art. No style reads more unaffectedly than Thackeray's; yet we know from his son-in-law, Leslie Stephen, that it was the outcome of infinite pains. Dean Church, a master of limpid, nervous English, said it had always seemed to him that thoughts brought their own words. This is the orthodox doctrine. It is the doctrine of Pater and Flaubert, no less than of the keenest advocate of simple and direct speech. But Church, by his dictum, never meant you to suppose that the thoughts brought the words without effort on the part of the writer. For indeed he goes on to say that the great thing is to know what you want to say, and to say it in words *as near your meaning as you can get them to come*. The final phrase reveals the writer's own experience of struggles with a reluctant instrument. The queer creatures who call themselves 'stylists' may use fine phrases or seek out far-fetched words to sophisticate their meaning or mask its insignificance. The true

writer, however great his love of language or curiosity about diction, is but perfecting his instrument. If a Gautier read and re-read his dictionary, or a Flaubert roll morsels of Chateaubriand on his tongue, or a Lamb hug his seventeenth-century folios, or a Stevenson play the sedulous ape to this or the other master, it is to the end that, when the thought calls, the words shall come. The drill is no idle discipline, for language is at the best but a halting servant.

Flaubert's trouble was that while he was unusually fastidious about the right phrase and rhythm, he could only find them by trying all the wrong ones; he had, so to speak, at once a critical ear and an unmanageable voice. No one who has had the experience will underrate the torment of it. So I am willing to believe in Flaubert's martyrdom; I think it likely he suffered sincerely, I believe he suffered not in vain.

W. P. JAMES.

RACHEL MARY.

'WHAT have you bin and let 'er come for, Mother?' says I. 'We don't want no dratted little wenches smearin' about the place. What have you bin and told 'er she could come for? Can't 'er feyther take 'er too?'

Mother was bakin' curran' bread and she'd just found one 'as 'ad cotched at the bottom, and burnt black an' smelt orful, so she 'adn't time to say nothin', an' she just sniffed and went on turnin' the loaves out of the tins.

'Can't 'er feyther take Rachel Mary with 'im to Rostrazier?' I said whining-like. 'Mother, we don't want no dratted little wenches smearin' about 'ere, does we? I can't abide wenches, Mother.'

Mother turned the last loaf out sharper than I looked for, and then she fetched round sudden-like and copped me a bat on th' year.

'Stop mythering, you young nowt,' says she. 'Where's them taters I told you to fetch in for th' pie? Never in my life have I seen such a young tinker. Layin' down the law to your feyther an' me about company we invite! Asking questions too! You ought to be quite set up an' pleased to 'ave a nice little girl to play with. You mind as you treat 'er kind or I'll show you. She's a deal less trouble than you, choose how.'

I said nothing more to Mother then, for I saw she was gettin' put out about it, and I went and fetched them taters as I'd left accidental in the old lading can aside the pigstye, and I chucked away the top ones, as th' old sow seemed to 'ave bin tastin' at through the bars of the gate, and took 'em in, and then I sneaked up to the top pasture and I felt that miserable, I couldn't 'elp wishin' I'd never been borned at all. 'What 'ave I bin let live for?' I sez to myself sad-like, and I fetched out a handful of green guse-berries and looked at 'em and put 'em back in my trousers' pocket, and 'adn't no appetites for nothing.

'Dratted little wenches smearin' about,' says I, an' I started cryin' an' I'd no nankercher, an' I felt a norful sinkin' feelin' inside. I went on cryin' then till I'd nothin' left to cry with, an' then I lay

quiet an' listened to a skrikin' old peewhit an' felt worser and worser, an' I were sure it was the same old peewhit whose eggs I'd 'appened to find and suck the day afore, an' I knew it were skrikin' at me, an' watchin' me, an' I felt orful.

An' then, all of a sudden, I 'eard someone a laughin' quite near, and I jumped up and there was Miss Primrose from the Rect'ry standin' lookin' at me with her eyes (all blue they is) smilin', an' 'er yellin' 'air blowin' loose round her face, an' her cheekes pink, an' 'er hat in 'er hand, all alone by 'erself, an' no one with 'er.

'Why, Peter,' she says, 'I saw your boots waving in the air half a mile away on the moor. What have you been doing to your poor little face too? Come here.'

She fetched out a nankercher with a little yellin' primrose worked so pretty in the corner, and she wiped my face an' eyes with it, an' it smelt all of lavender like our best piller slips and she put 'er 'ands on my shoulder and said so soft and sweet-like:

'My Peter's not been crying? Sit down on the heather beside me, and tell me all about it.'

'It's Rachel Mary,' says I, sniffin' orful. 'Mother's bin an' gone an' let Rachel Mary come an' live in th' 'ouse with us. We don't want no dratted little wenches smearin' about. Please, Miss, can't you come to our 'ouse an' tell Mother she's not to?'

Miss Primrose, she didn't laugh at me at all. 'Don't you want a nice little playfellow, Peter?' says she. 'You always seem such a lonely little boy!'

'Don't want no wenches,' sez I. 'If it 'ad bin a lad I could 'ave give 'im a good 'idin' when he crossed me.—Wenches—if you hit 'em they runs 'an' tells your mother, an' our William he lets her sit on his knee of an evening when she comes in, an' when I come in he puts 'is foot out an' trips me, an' fetches me a clout.'

Miss Primrose she says nothin', and she puts her 'and under her chin and lays her other arm acrost my shoulders. An' then she gives a deep sigh and she smiles (a tiny little 'un) an' she says to me, she says: 'I was a little wench once, Peter.'

I said nothin'. There wasn't nothin' to say.

'And my brother—that tall Mr. Humphrey, you know—the one that's away sailing on the sea—well, Humphrey and I used to go to school down Cherry Lane, past the reservoir, all the way to Miss McAdams by the old mill in the hollow. And—oh, Peter, what times we had.'

I stared at 'er. All pink-like 'er face was, and 'er eyes so blue an' lookin' away acrost the valley to the woodses.

'Ripping times,' says she. 'Birds-nesting——'

I jumped. 'I go bird-neesting, too——' sez I quick.

She laughed.

'Of course you do. All boys and girls go bird-nesting if they're any good. And I could climb every bit as well as Humphrey, yet I was only a little girl like Rachel Mary. But we never took more than one egg from a nest—remember that.'

I said nothin'. I wasn't going to tell her about that dratted old peewhit. Not me.

'What times!' says she, ever so sad all of a sudden. 'Trespassing everywhere; trespassing in the gulley; climbing over the hedges and fences; following the stream on stepping-stones; taking off our shoes and stockings.'

'Me too,' says I, standin' up an' thinkin' of all sorts. 'Me too——'

'Playing follow-my-leader up the stream and round the plantation and——'

'You can't play foller-my-leader by yourself,' says I sharp-like. Miss Primrose thought a minute.

'But with Rachel Mary?' she says quite serious.

I said nothin'. I couldn't think of nothin' to say.

'Playing truant,' Miss Primrose cried all of a laugh.

'Playin' wot?' says I starin'. I'd never 'eard of no such games.

'Wag,' sez she, quick, all pink faced and her eyes shinin'.

'Playing wag. Stopping in the lanes instead of going to school. Terribly naughty, Peter. Do good girls and boys *ever* play wag? But Humphrey and I were *very* naughty children. Still, what lovely times we did have! Riding on the old sheep up here on the pasture, and beyond there across the moors. Clinging on to their dirty grey wool——'

I stood up an' give a shout.

'My feyther clouted me yesterday for ridin' th' old ewe,' I cried.

Miss Primrose stopped smiling and stood up aside me.

'You must never do anything your father doesn't like,' said she all of a sudden quite serious again. 'You must always obey your father and mother and be a good boy—remember that. And—Peter—you'll be as nice as you can to Rachel Mary, won't you? because—well, you like me, don't you?—and you know now that I

was once a little wench like Rachel Mary. And now I'm getting quite an old, old lady. Oh dear, dear.'

I don't know what she went an' said that for. Mother says she's just twenty year of age, Miss Primrose, an' that's not so terrible old neither. But she went off there an' left me—singin' she was—somethin' in a low voice all to herself.

Cork's old city
And the blue sky above us,
And the times as was—the times as was.

I don't never like it when Miss Primrose goes away. No one never looks at me so kind an' talks to me as if I were worth talkin' to same as she does. I'm never let talk at home, and when I do 'appen to pass a remark, there's always someone 'andy to chuck somethin' at my 'ead an' say 'Shut up!'

I run off 'ome when Miss Primrose had climbed the wall into the lane an' I couldn't see 'er no more, an' I run right into the back kitchin an' there were Rachel Mary with 'er 'air in thirteen plaits, an' a napron with blue spots pinned all over 'er, washin' pots like mad at the slopstone, and singing a nymn called, 'Oh, it is glory to be there.'

'Come on,' I says hurried-like, but Rachel Mary she went on dryin' pots and took no notice. Copyin' Feyther an' Mother an' our William in the way she be'aves to me!

'Let's go and play us,' I says quick, for I could 'ear Mother tellin' off William in the front gardin, an' I knew she'd be back in a minute.

Rachel Mary—she put a cup down and she looked at me doubtful-like, an' then she looked out of the winder at the yard gate standin' open an' the white lane beyond, and she says:

'I doubt your Mother ull sauce if I do.'

'Come on,' I says. 'Take your apron off an' run——' An' then the sun came shinin' in through the winder an' she says all queer-like: 'I've bin listenin' to a lark singin', through the open winder——'

An' then I says again:

'Come on! Run! Run!' And she copped hold of my hand an' we run through the yard and down the lane, an' the dogs, Shep an' old Laddie come with us, and we 'eard Mother shoutin' at us in the yard, but we took no notice of nobody, an' we run an' run an' run across the two fields, and climbed the wall into the big medder an'

Rachel Mary fell over a pig as 'appened to be sleepin' under it, and got up an' said nothin', an' we run an' run till we got to Cherry Lane an' there we stopped. I knowed Mother 'ud never come so far as that. Short of wind, Mother is.

Rachel Mary, she says in a frightened voice :

'I never brought no hat.'

'Tie your ankercher on your 'ed then,' says I.

'I've not got no ankercher—I doubt your Mother 'ull sauce Peter—'

I gives a shout and says : 'Foller-your-leader—I'm the leader. Come—on—'

I'd never 'ad such a nappy afternoon as that there, since me an' Percy Simms dammed up the stream and turned it right acrost Higgin's tater-field two year back, an' th' old tea-man cotched us an' made 's pull all them stones out again.

Wenches isn't as good as lads, but Rachel Mary didn't cry when she 'urt 'erself, an' when I fell by accident in the deep pool in Cherry Gully, she went an' fell in afterwards because I'd done it, an' when she'd shook 'erself and tried to dry 'erself in the sun like Shep and Laddie, she said she felt awful damp an' perhaps we'd better go 'ome now to our teas.

A deal was said when we got 'ome. Mother said : 'Whatever have them children been an' fallen in now, Feyther ?' an' Feyther said what Peter wanted was stick and plenty of it, and Mother was to put the little wench to bed an' give 'er some 'ot grewel. We don't none of us care for Mother's grewel. An' Feyther give me th' strap, an' I kicked our William's shins for laughin' at me, and next day Mother said as 'ow Rachel Mary's feyther wanted 'er to go to school at old Miss McAdams down by the mill and that Peter was to go with 'er, to mind 'er, an' they could take their dinners and they'd be out of everybody's road till five o'clock, an' what a blessin' that would be.

'I'll not go,' says I firm.

'You'll not wot ?' sez Mother, quiet-like, lookin' round for somethin' to box me with, 'er 'ands bein' in a bowl of pastry at the time. An' then I thought of all them things Miss Primrose and Mr. Humphrey had done in Cherry Lane on their way to school, an' I says all soft :

'Yes, Mother. What shall us take for our dinners to-morrer, Mother ?'

We did *all* them things, Rachel Mary an' me. Birds-neesing,

an' only two from a nest—one for 'er an' one for me. We got four throllys an' a nedge-sparrer an' seven green linnets an' a jinny wren an' a shepster an' we trespassed everywhere as we could find a board up sayin' 'ow we should be persecuted, an' we climbed into the wood where them white wild onion flowers grow, as look so pretty an' smell so nasty, an' Rachel Mary picked a bunch to take 'ome, an' our William carried on awful when 'e came in to his tea, an' found as she'd tied 'em on to a nice round bunch from our garden as he'd got ready to take to his young lady and 'appened to leave lyin' on the chair. But we never played wag but onst.

It were such a nice day—I've never seed such a nice day as that there. All blue an' shinin' an' the wild cherry trees white in flower, an' primroses out by the reservoir an' we found a norful nice pond in a field of medder grass as was just growin' as we'd never dared run across before, an' we got big lumps of clay out of the banks and carried 'em back to Cherry Lane and made a shop, where the wall's fallin' down, an' there's a nice flat stone for a counter, an' I kept shop, an' Rachel Mary came to buy. You can make a norful lot of things from clay—cheeses an' big round o' butter an' loaves, an' apples an' oranges an' what not. You can make dishes an' pans, too, an' teapots an' cups an' saucers an' dry 'em in the sun. An' we played an' played, an' it seemed a terrible long time, an' Rachel Mary said she knew by a sinkin' feelin' under her pinny that it was one o'clock, an' time for dinner.

Meat pies they was an' a napple each. We'd never 'ad no guseberries since the time we prigged 'all them green 'uns an' Miss McAdam found 'em in the basket an' sent 'em back to Mother, an' told her all about it in a note we was to take 'er. We gave 'er the note not knowin' what it were about, an' Mother said lookin' in the basket: 'Where's them green guseberries?'

'What green guseberries, mother?' says I innocent-like, and then she read the letter aloud and Feyther give me the most thunderin' good 'idin' 'e'd ever give me, an' Rachel Mary was sent to bed.

An' that day that we played wag, we ate our dinners an' we played tick, an' 'ide an' seek, an' found a blackbird's nest in a thorn tree, an' then Rachel Mary says she knew it was nearly tea-time by another sinkin' feelin' she 'ad and 'adn't we better go home? 'What shall we do if your Mother axes us?' says she solemn.

'Tell 'er,' sez I. 'It'll be over to-morrer whatever she does at us. It's no good tellin' lies, Rachel Mary. Someone always goes

and finds out. An' them wenches of Slaters saw us playin' ourselves in the lane.'

'She'll sauce awful,' said Rachel Mary, frightened-like.

'If she don't sauce for that, she'll sauce for summat else,' says I gloomy.

'I doubt she'll clout us, Peter.

'She's always cloutin',' says I sharp. 'An' so's Feyther. A deal too ready with their 'ands both on 'em is.'

'But not to me,' says Rachel Mary in a whiney voice. 'She'll give us both a good 'idin', Peter——'

'There's nothin' new in that,' says I sad-like.

'It's new to me,' sez Rachel Mary, startin' to cry. 'I shan't go home till you've promised not to tell, Peter.'

'Oh, all right, cry-baby,' says I. 'A lie isn't nothin' to me. Come on then——'

It seemed a norful short way home that day an' yet Rachel Mary lagged behind. An' when we got into the 'ouse there was Miss Primrose sittin' on the rocking chair with the black kitling on her lap, talking to Mother, and I seed directly I set eyes on the clock on the manklepiece as it were only half-past eleven.

'No?' sez Mother when she seed us. 'What's got you home so soon? An' me lookin' for a quiet day with all that washin'.'

'I'm hindering you,' says Miss Primrose, gettin' up, but Mother stopped 'er quick an' said she was a sight for sore eyes an' please sit down again.

'What's got you home so soon, Peter?' says she in a disappointed voice.

Rachel Mary pinched me.

'We've got a nalf 'oliday,' says I, pinchin' back—'ard.

'But it's only half-past eleven.'

I never said nothing. There wasn't nothin' to say.

'Peter!' says Mother very solemn. 'You've played wag! Tell me the trewth.'

Rachel Mary nudged me.

'No, Mother, we've not,' sez I, nudging back. Sharp 'er elbows is.

'Rachel Mary,' says Mother, changin' 'er voice a bit, 'have you an' Peter played wag?'

'N—no,' sez Rachel Mary very low. Mother looked awful black. She folded 'er arms an' fixed me with 'er eye.

'Peter—tell me the trewth. Have you been to school to-day?'

'Yes, Mother,' says I, innocent. Rachel Mary didn't do nothin'—'er face was all red an' crinkly.

'Rachel Mary, tell me the trewth. Have you an' Peter been to school to-day?'

Rachel Mary was shakin' all over. 'Er eyes was wet. Silly!

'No—we've not,' says she, an' she dropped the basket on my foot, an' run out of the 'ouse. And Miss Primrose sat very quiet smoothin' the black kitling and not sayin' nothin' to nobody.

'Well!' says Mother, 'Peter 'ull come to a bad end. Thrashin' 'im's no good, for we've tried it. Talkin' to 'im's wasted breath. The only thing I can think of is to reach 'im through his meals. Bread an' water for a week an' go to bed at tea-time. We'll see what that'll do.'

I 'adn't got no ankercher but I rubbed my eyes with my jacket sleeve.

'I'd rayther you'd give me a good 'idin',' says I, sniffin'.

'You'll 'ave that as well,' says Mother, smilin' in a norrid way.

An' then Miss Primrose put the kitling down aside the old cat on the hearth, and got up, an' she laid 'er and on my shoulder and spoke to Mother in a sorrowful voice.

'It's all my fault,' she said. 'I wanted Peter to be friends with Rachel Mary. I wanted the children to be as happy together as Humphie and I were. I'm afraid I was very unwise. I told Peter about all the things we used to do together. Playing truant was one of them. We were such naughty children Humphie and I, but such good play-fellows. Do you remember how we got out of bed one warm moonlight night and stole a bag of Margaret apples out of your orchard?'

Mother laughed and said they'd been a fine pair of young limbs in their time.

'You weren't a bit cross with us,' Miss Primrose says, takin' Mother's 'and an' strokin' it same as she stroked the black kitling. Mother's 'and isn't a soft one neither. 'You only laughed,' said she. 'Don't punish Peter this time, because it was all my fault.'

Mother said she'd see what my Feyther said. I knew what he'd say. With 'is boot.

'No,' Miss Primrose said in a soft voice. 'Promise me—oh, what times we had!—why, I never walk down Cherry Lane now, that I don't see two fat little ghosts trotting along ahead of me—ghosts of what were once Humphie and me—'

And she gave a deep sigh. Mother says it's because Mr. Humphie's been away so long a-sailing on the sea.

'Promise me,' she said.

Mother sat her down sudden.

'I wouldn't care,' sez she, 'if the lad hadn't lied about it. I can't abide a lie.'

Miss Primrose looked at me so sad an' sweet-like an' I said nothin'. I couldn't think of nothin' to say. An' then all of a sudden the back kitchin door was banged open an' Rachel Mary stood there with 'er eyes all red an' 'er plaits standin' straight out.

'It's not Peter, it's me,' she said. 'Peter wanted to tell the trewth. He said he'd rather have a good 'idin' an' get it over. An' then I were frikened and I cried——' She was not cryin' now.

'Oh, drat the childer,' Mother said; but Miss Primrose gave a funny little laugh and went up to Rachel Mary and kissed her—an' then she kissed me too, and she said she was proud of us both an' Mother said, starin': 'Lor', Miss, whatever for—I've never seed nothin' in them two to be proud of.'

'And you'll promise?'

An' there stood Miss Primrose smilin' an' waitin' an' Mother looked at me an' Rachel Mary an' said sharp: 'Be off, then, out of my sight till dinner's ready. Young tinkers!'

An' all at onst I 'eard Feythor's voice in the yard tellin' our William about somethin' he'd forgot to do, and I didn't wait to 'ear nothin' more.

Fancy Rachel Mary tellin' about bein' so frikened. I wouldn't never have done it. Not me. Rum things them little wenches is.

DOROTHEA DEAKIN.

EDWARD FITZGERALD AT WOODBRIDGE.

SUFFOLK, that 'sweet and civil county,' as Bishop Hall calls it, has seldom received its due of praise, perhaps *caret quia vate sacro*. But though it is hardly a picturesque county, it is full of character. It has an air of ancient and settled habitation, and contains many stately and seemly houses in well-wooded domains. Its landscape is on large and open lines, with wide and spacious prospects, and affords that sense of liberal air and far-reaching cloud-perspective which is in itself a high charm. Then, too, its great rolling heaths, its ridged and sandy warrens, with their crisp turf and wind-swept firs, are not only beautiful in themselves, but provide a unique type of richly-coloured foreground for distant cloud-banks and transparent skies. Another feature is the winding sea-creeks and estuaries that insinuate themselves far inland, fed by innumerable sluices and outfalls and reedy stream-beds, the salt marshes, dense with quaint brine-nurtured herbage, running to the bases of the low hills, in wide green levels through which the oozy channel welters to the sea.

Just such a stream is the pleasant Deben, upon whose bank, on a gently-swelling slope, at a point some ten miles from the sea, sits the comfortable little town of Woodbridge, with its long narrow street, its prosperous houses of warm brick, its miniature quays and warehouses, the whole dominated by a stately church-tower of stone, with inlaid panel-work of flint. It is not a town of great pretensions or memorable history, but just a busy and contented human settlement, healthily interested in its own doings and sayings, amicably complacent and tranquilly hospitable, and with no intention of trying to be anything else but the sensible and good-humoured little centre of a rustic country-side.

On this peaceable little town has fallen the lustre of a name which, if not exactly great in literature, has, for the sake of one slender and flawless piece of work, its own very distinct and honoured place on the roll of English poets. When Edward FitzGerald was lounging about the streets and quays of Woodbridge, melancholy and eccentric, it is hard to say whether he would have been more amazed at the thought of the possibility of his memory

investing the little town with singular and durable interest, or the kindly burghers of Woodbridge at the idea of the place becoming a shrine of pilgrimage for the sake of their strange fellow-townsmen, whom they regarded with a compassionate and not wholly indulgent amusement. But life has its surprises, and the meteor falls in unexpected places.

The whole of FitzGerald's life was practically spent in or near Woodbridge. He was born at Bredfield House, a plastered Jacobean manor house of no great pretensions, with round-topped gables and solid chimney-stacks, standing in pleasant meadowlands. It was of this house that he wrote, with that curious felicity so characteristic of him in catching the evasive and essential picturesqueness of a place, that from the road before the lawn could be seen the topmasts of the men-of-war lying in Hollesley Bay, adding: 'I like the idea of this; the old English house holding up its inquiring chimneys and weathercocks (there is great physiognomy in weathercocks) towards the far-off sea, and the ships upon it.' Here, too, it was that, rambling desolately about as an old man, he halted, and, though he would not enter the house, he peered long and curiously into the windows of the Magistrate's room, because it was there that he used to be whipped.

FitzGerald's father and mother were first cousins. His father's name was originally Purcell; he was the son of a wealthy Irish doctor, who traced his descent from Cromwell. His mother was descended from the Earls of Kildare, and was a great heiress, owning estates in Northamptonshire, Suffolk, and elsewhere. His father assumed the name of FitzGerald on his marriage. He was a typical country squire, M.P. for Seaford, but with a taste for speculation which landed him eventually in financial disaster.

When FitzGerald was sixteen his father moved to Wherstead Lodge, to the south of Ipswich, ten miles away from Woodbridge; a fine dignified house, with a famous collection of pictures, which possibly gave FitzGerald his taste for art, and especially for portraits; but during the years at Wherstead, FitzGerald was much away from home, at school and at Cambridge, and on the vague rambles in which he endlessly indulged; but in 1835 a further move was made, and his father came back to the near neighbourhood of Woodbridge, to Boulge Hall, not far from Bredfield, an estate which he had purchased subject to the life-interest of a widow lady, Mrs. Short. The FitzGeralds seemed always destined to be mixed up with eccentric people, and Mrs. Short was no exception. She

had lived on acrimonious terms with her husband, a Colonel Short : there were long periods when the pair would hold no direct converse with each other, and made their intentions and opinions mutually known by communicating them in loud tones to a dog and a cat respectively. At the end of her life Mrs. Short had constructed a bungalow for herself near the Hall gates, which may be seen to this day, in which she lived in secluded independence. It was this cottage which was afterwards taken possession of by Edward FitzGerald, and where he lived for many years. It is a thin-walled thatched house, damp and cheerless, but compact enough, containing two fair-sized rooms, with a cottage at the back.

The Hall itself is a fine house of Queen Anne date, with a balustraded terrace, standing among spacious gardens and shrubberies. FitzGerald said that it stood in the ugliest and dullest country in England, and it has a bleak, wind-swept air ; but it is finely timbered, and the rich meadow-lands are full of flowers in spring, cowslips and violets, while the roadsides are thick with succory, wiry-stalked and blue-rosetted, a flower for which FitzGerald had a particular love.

At the little thatched lodge FitzGerald settled himself in 1837. He was waited upon by a Waterloo veteran, one John Faire, a labourer on the estate, and his wife, a grotesque lady whose oddities were a source of delight to FitzGerald—the redness of her arms, the snuff she took, her inordinate vanity, as symbolised by a flowered bonnet. He lived what he called a Robinson Crusoe sort of life, with a dog, a cat, and a parrot, with books and papers piled up in pleasant confusion, and a bust of Shakespeare in an alcove for a household god. Here he sate and smoked, unkempt and unshaven, ate his simple meals, with a barrel of beer to enliven him, read, wrote, and meditated, and let the world go on its way.

‘He is in a state,’ wrote Spedding, ‘of disgraceful indifference to everything except grass and fresh air. What will become of him in this world?’

Meanwhile the reprobate philosopher wrote of himself :

Here I live with tolerable content : perhaps with as much as most people arrive at, and what if one were properly grateful one would perhaps call perfect happiness, Here is a glorious sunshiny day ; all the morning I read about Nero in Tacitus, lying at full length on a bench in the garden, a nightingale singing, and some red anemones eyeing the sun manfully not far off. A funny mixture all this—Nero, and the delicacy of Spring : all very human, however. Then at half-past one, lunch on Cambridge cream cheese : then a ride over hill and dale : then spudding up some weeds from the grass : and then coming in, I sit down to write to you, my

sister winding red worsted from the back of a chair, and the most delightful little girl in the world chattering incessantly. So runs the world away. You think I live in Epicurean ease; but this happens to be a jolly day: one isn't always well, or tolerably good, the weather is not always clear, nor nightingales singing, nor Tacitus full of pleasant atrocity. But such as life is, I believe I have got hold of a good end of it . . .

The charm of that is its freshness, its childlike zest, and the sense that, after all, innocent happiness not obtained at the expense of others is the thing that we are most of us in search of. Add a touch of labour, and the life is one that would not disgrace a Socialist community; while if the wants of all were as few and simple as the wants of FitzGerald, the haggard ghosts of social problems would soon cease to haunt us.

In 1852 FitzGerald's father died, leaving his affairs in some confusion. John, the elder brother, took possession of Boulge Hall. John was a man whose eccentricity verged on insanity; he had a religious monomania, and would go miles to address a meeting, in order to shake the impenitent over the pit. The two brothers were by no means on cordial terms, and when John began to fell timber and alter the house, FitzGerald broke up his establishment at Boulge, and moved his furniture to the house of a farmer—Farlingay Hall—whose son was a protégé of his, and had acted as his evening reader when FitzGerald's eyes had troubled him. 'My host,' he wrote to Carlyle, 'is a taciturn, cautious, honest man, whom I have known all my life. He and his wife, a capital housewife, and his son, who could carry me on his shoulders to Ipswich, and a maid-servant, who as she curtsies of a morning lets fall the teapot etc., constitute the household.'

It was in the same year that FitzGerald made friends with E. B. Cowell, afterwards a Cambridge Professor, then a young man of twenty, son of an Ipswich corn merchant, who had employed his leisure time after business hours in learning Latin, Sanskrit, and Persian. Cowell was a shy, modest, and humorous man, simple-minded and deeply religious, with an immense and catholic taste for literature, and a marvellous memory, but with no great gifts of expression. He wrote of himself with characteristic humility that his chief function in life was to encourage other people to work. He married a Miss Charlesworth, a lady some years older than himself, who was not less devoted to literature, and whom FitzGerald found a congenial and sympathetic friend. It was at this time that Cowell introduced FitzGerald to

Persian poetry, and sowed the seed which blossomed in Omar Khayyám.

The Cowells were living at a cottage in the village of Bramford, near Ipswich, and the three spent many happy hours in the old-fashioned garden, with its big monkey-puzzle tree, or strolling in the hayfields by the mill-stream.

It was at Farlingay that the memorable visit of Carlyle took place. An infinity of letters passed between FitzGerald and the Carlyles. Mrs. Carlyle had to be consulted as to the appropriate diet for the sage; Carlyle had to be reassured about the crowing of cocks and the incursions of company: elaborate directions as to times of trains were despatched, and Carlyle was repeatedly instructed that he might do exactly as he liked about work and exercise and smoking—might come and go as he chose. 'It will be pleasant,' wrote Carlyle with unusual geniality, 'to see your face at the end of my shrieking, mad, (and to me quite horrible) rail operations. . . . I hope to get to Farlingay not long after four o'clock, and have a quiet mutton chop in due time and have a ditto pipe or pipes: nay I could even have a bathe if there was any sea water left in the evening.' The visit was a success, the only untoward incident being the outrageous behaviour of certain cows, which lowed furiously half a night, to the 'endless sorrow of poor Fitz.' But they were banished with apologies, and all went well. The odd pair strolled, sate in the sun, and drove about in a little pony trap. Carlyle wrote afterwards of FitzGerald as 'a lonely, shy, kind-hearted man who discharged the sacred rites (of hospitality) with a kind of Irish zeal or piety.' He complained that he had not been left quite enough alone, but he was pleased to say of FitzGerald's homely friends that 'he did not fare intolerably with them.' Carlyle read Voltaire and meditated over 'Frederick,' on which he was engaged, finally going off home by the Ipswich steamer, declining to be shut up in a railway carriage 'like a great codfish in a hamper.' A month later he wrote: 'On the whole I say, when you get your little Suffolk cottage, you must have in it a "chamber in the wall" for me, *plus* a pony that can trot, and a cow that gives good milk: with these outfits we shall make a pretty rustication now and then, not wholly Latrappish, but only *half*, on much easier terms than here; and I for one shall be right willing to come and try it, I for one party.'

The Farlingay period was rich in sorrows for FitzGerald. The Cowells went to India; he lost his greatest friend, E. K. Browne,

as the result of a hunting accident; and he married Bernard Barton's daughter.

Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet, a bank-manager at Woodbridge, was one of FitzGerald's chief associates. It is almost incredible, if one reads his poems, to realise that the author was actually a man of some celebrity in the literary world, with a Civil List pension of £100 a year; but he had evidently considerable charm of manner—the charm perhaps of unembarrassed simplicity coupled with a genuine love of letters. FitzGerald found him an interesting study, full of contradictions, being both good-natured and perverse, cautious and unworldly; vain, yet with a pretence of humility; he wrote poetry with an appalling facility, and had a childlike delight and pride in all he did; he never corrected a line, and was as eager for everyone else to write verse as he was to write it himself, while he was as uncritical of the performances of others as he was of his own; his poetry was full of conventional sentiment and fervent piety: yet for all that he was not only the beloved friend of FitzGerald, but Charles Lamb wrote him some of his most enchanting letters, which prove that while he loved and respected Barton he found him delightfully absurd and entertaining. Bernard Barton's health was much affected by his sedentary life and incessant authorship; he was highly hypochondriacal, and used to talk of resigning his post. Southey, who was also his friend, told him frankly to go early to bed and avoid suppers; but Charles Lamb rated him in his most whimsically rhetorical style:

You are much too apprehensive about your complaint. I know many that are always ailing of it and live on to a good old age. Believe the general sense of the mercantile world, which holds that desks are not deadly. It is the mind, good B. B., and not the limbs, that faints by long sitting. Think of the patience of tailors—think how long the Lord Chancellor sits—think of the brooding hen.

But perhaps the strongest testimony to the charm of Bernard Barton's talk is the fact that when he went to see Sir Robert Peel, on the subject of a possible grant from the Civil List, Peel, who was not by any means an impressible person, asked him to dinner, and a few days after awarded him a permanent pension.

Of FitzGerald's marriage, which took place soon after Bernard Barton's death, enough and more than enough has been said and written. The affair is involved in considerable mystery. Miss Barton was a capable, active, good-humoured, conventional woman, precise and orderly, and not in the least fitted to be the wife of a

desultory and eccentric man of genius. FitzGerald, on the other hand, was not fitted for married life, and least of all at an age when his habits had become crystallised. One of the most painful and pathetic of all his letters was one written to Miss Cowell not long after his marriage, in which he speaks of channels fretted in his cheeks by unmanly tears. The untoward experiment did not last long. FitzGerald drifted back into solitude, bore with such philosophy as he could muster the extremely disagreeable comments made upon the affair by his neighbours, and the pair hardly met again, though it is said that Mrs. FitzGerald long cherished a hope that some *modus vivendi* might be arrived at. What FitzGerald's own motive in the matter was it is hard to say; it was certainly neither love nor the desire for companionship. Whatever it was, it was certainly a chivalrous and highminded resolve, which he was unable to carry out. He believed that he was under some sort of obligation to protect and provide for Miss Barton, and that he had made some sort of promise to Bernard Barton on the subject. It may be supposed that in all probability the difficulty arose from some expression used by FitzGerald, which was misunderstood by Barton, and which he was too delicate to explain. It remains a lamentable mistake, which clouded FitzGerald's life, at all events for a time, and a mistake which was characteristic both of the delicacy and of the irresolution of the man.

FitzGerald's next abode, where he remained for thirteen years, was a lodging in the market-place of Woodbridge, at the house of a gun-maker named Berry. The house, or modest shop, is now dignified with a memorial tablet recording the fact of his sojourn there.

Market Hill, at Woodbridge, is a little irregular square of prosperous-looking shops and private houses. The quaint old Shire Hall, with its tiled roof, its walls of weathered brick, its overhanging eaves and solid cornice, is a pleasant feature of the place. The ground-floor space of the building, crowded with the lockers of the corn-factors, is a busy scene on market days. FitzGerald did not contemplate a very long stay at Berry's; his little parlour was more like a storehouse than a sitting-room; neither was he made comfortable; in the matter of food, with his simple tastes, he was independent, and though he had neither liking nor respect for his landlord, he stayed on from pure inertia. He built a little sailing yacht which he called the *Scandal*, because it was the staple product of Woodbridge, and because all other names were taken up. With a queer and knowing old salt, Thomas Newson, for a skipper, he sailed

about in a leisurely way, once going so far as Holland. 'Doesn't Newson make you think of a magpie looking in a quart pot?' said FitzGerald to a friend, touching off a picture in a sentence, and added 'He is always smiling, yet the wretched fellow is the father of twins.' It was here, too, that FitzGerald met the stalwart boatman, Joseph Fletcher, afterwards named Posh, whom FitzGerald idolised as a gentleman of nature's grandest type. His simplicity and kindness, and a gift of racy and idiomatic speech, endeared him to his master, who, it must be confessed, wasted a good deal of sentiment over this young sea-lion.

All this time he was working away by fits and starts, translating *Æschylus*, revising *Omar*, reading, meditating, talking with his varied assortment of friends—and meanwhile he bought a house on the outskirts of Woodbridge, to which he made considerable additions, and which was ultimately to be his last home. It stood, however, unoccupied for some years, till his landlord, Berry, whose first wife had died, announced his intention of marrying again. FitzGerald seems to have said to a friend that it was a foolish act, and that instead of calling him 'Old Berry,' as before, he must now be called 'Old Goose Berry.' The jest came to the ears of the new wife, and a ludicrous scene followed, Mr. Berry stalking upstairs to demand explanations and apologies, while his aggrieved partner encouraged him from below. 'Be firm, Berry! Remind him of what he called you!' This grotesque incident severed the knot, and FitzGerald found himself homeless once more. He was compelled to move into the house which he had built for himself, at considerable expense, and which had been standing vacant for some years.

Littlegrange is somehow a rather disappointing house to the eye of the enthusiastic pilgrim. In the pictures it has an air of irregular and secluded dignity, and its timbered walks and flower-set pleasures suggest a poetic charm. But the present-day surroundings of the house detract very much from its seemliness. It stood formerly on the outskirts of the town, off the main road, the only houses near it being one or two more substantial mansions standing in their own grounds; but Woodbridge has expanded in that direction, and the place is on two sides engulfed in rows of new streets and villas, which give the house a forlorn suburban air, and rob it of all sense of privacy.

FitzGerald took but one large room downstairs for himself, dividing it by folding-doors. One part was his bedroom, the other his study, which was lined with books. In the entrance-hall

hard by stood an organ, on which he would play favourite pieces with the full rich straightforward harmonies which he loved. The house was handsomely, if somewhat austere, furnished, and left for his nieces to occupy when they cared to visit him. He lived here the same vague and innocent life, entertaining a few old friends, with entire indifference as to their social standing, from an Arch-deacon to a boatman. His talk must have had a singular charm, like his letters; he loved anecdote and reminiscence, especially vernacular Suffolk stories, and his half-melancholy humour, his sense of the evasiveness of joy, never drearily intruded yet never absent from his thoughts for long, gave all he said a tender, half-regretful quality. But Fitzgerald was in no sense a moralist, for ever bewailing the lapse of life; it was rather that he lived in a twilight region of dying light and lengthening shadows, the mood that penetrates his one great poem, and which, if inconsistent with a healthy and whole-hearted enjoyment of life, lends poignancy to its savours and richness to its complex charm.

But the nine years that he spent at Littlegrange were from first to last the closing scene. 'I find life little worth now,' he wrote; 'not that I am unhappy, but so wofully indifferent.' He could not bear to be absent from home for long.

It was here that Tennyson visited him in 1876 with his son Hallam, the present Lord Tennyson. FitzGerald was delighted that the son called the father 'Papa,' and not 'Governor.' He took Tennyson whimsically to task for his poetic decline, and told him that he had better not have written anything after 1842, adding that he had ceased to be a poet and had become an artist. It was with a memory of this visit that Tennyson wrote the charming dedication of the *Tiresias* volume, which, however, FitzGerald did not live to see published.

Whom yet I see as there you sit
 Beneath your sheltering garden-tree,
 And while your doves about you flit,
 And plant on shoulder, hand and knee,
 Or on your head their rosy feet;

He was an old man now, and was growing more and more inactive. He still wrote a little from time to time, and in his seventieth year brought out a little edition of *Readings from Crabbe*. His old friends began to fall out of the ranks, Carlyle and Spedding dying in the same year. It was in the summer of 1883 that he left Littlegrange to stay with his friend, George Crabbe, the poet's

grandson, at Merton. He stopped at Bury, and went to look at his old school; he arrived at Merton in the evening, tired, but in good spirits; and died quietly in his sleep in the course of the night, as unobtrusively as he had always wished. He is buried in Boulge Churchyard, with the words 'It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves,' inscribed upon his grave.

It is as well to face the melancholy fact that FitzGerald's life at Woodbridge had not, in the eyes of his simple neighbours, the dignity and interest which it might be thought, from the books written about him, to have earned and even to have deserved. If he had been as famous then as he is now, the case would have been very different; but forty years ago, the idea that FitzGerald was destined to take his place among the great literary figures of the day, that he would so far rank among the immortals as to have the centenary of his birth celebrated with reverent solemnity, would, as I have said, have seemed ludicrous to FitzGerald's neighbours and preposterous to FitzGerald himself. To them he was simply an eccentric and a recluse, abnormal, hardly of unquestioned sanity; the words 'soft' and 'dotty' were applied to him by his simpler acquaintances, and if he was more compassionate than derided it was because of the indulgence conceded to a man who was both harmless and generous, no one's enemy but his own, and hallowed by the secure distinction of belonging to an undoubted county family. Moreover, he had a certain personal dignity, and could effectively defend himself against liberties. But we must resolutely guard ourselves against the idea that he was a person of consequence, though his few intimates respected him for his kindness and his independence, for the esteem in which he was held by men of undisputed eminence, and perhaps towards the end of his life for the signs of a growing reputation in the world of letters.

It is easy to construct a picture of him as an elderly man at Woodbridge. He was tall and in many respects active, but irresolute in his movements; bald, with a high domed forehead; his hair long and straggling, with thin whiskers over somewhat hollow cheeks. His eyes dim and sunken, with a fatigued and melancholy expression; his broad and mobile mouth with a depressed curve. Those who knew him best were most conscious of the absence of lightheartedness, the regretful and wistful outlook on the world, the sense of acquiescent failure.

Add to this that he wore a battered black-banded tall hat, tied

on by a handkerchief in windy weather, a suit of baggy blue sea-cloth, low shoes and white stockings, high stand-up collars, and a loosely tied black silk cravat; trailing a grey plaid in cold weather; in hot weather often walking in his stockinged feet with his boots slung to a stick. This costume was, of course, not so strange forty years ago as it would be at the present day; but it was eccentric even then. To see him thus attired, wading out from his boat when it came ashore, knee-deep in the shallow water, must have been a sight calculated to arouse wonder, to say the least!

And then, too, his habits of life were all planned in a whimsical and unconventional manner; he hated formal meals, and avoided all ordinary entertainments. He lived mostly on bread, tea, and fruit. He dawdled about just as the whim took him. He might be found mooning along the lanes or drifting down to the Deben for a cruise in his boat, entirely absorbed in some train of reflection. At home in the evenings he would sit to be read aloud to in dressing-gown and tall hat, only removing the latter to extract a red silk handkerchief, with snuff-box on knee, stroking his whiskers reflectively with a paper-knife.

FitzGerald was catholic and unconventional in his choice of friends; he had a large and loyal heart, and seems never to have discarded an old friend for the sake of a new one. They were to be found all up and down the social scale; he seems to have had no principle of selection, but followed where his fancy led him, choosing men—for his women friends were comparatively few—with whom he could be at his ease and unembarrassed, and in whom he discerned some characteristic that pleased him—sympathy, or humour, or shrewdness, or a gift of racy expression, or simplicity, or congenial interests. He was strongly alive to personal charm of face, voice, and manner. But what he seems to have valued most was a certain simple unaffectedness and accessibility. There was no decorous visiting list, no sense of class, no knowing the people whom it would be natural for him to know. Stevenson says that the modest man finds his circle ready-made; and this was pre-eminently the case with FitzGerald. It must be borne in mind that he was the beloved friend of Tennyson, Carlyle and Thackeray; but after the early days he saw them rarely, though he kept up close and affectionate relations with them by letters. At Woodbridge his chief associates were George Crabbe, the Vicar of Breadfield, the poet's grandson, Bernard Barton, Alfred Smith of Farlingay, and a few other townsfolk, down to his favourite boatmen, whom he delighted

to entertain at simple banquets. He was a charming talker when he was in the mood, fanciful, humorous, allusive, with a store of reminiscence and local anecdotes. It amused and even gratified him to hear that he and his friends were called 'the wits of Woodbridge.' But in friendship alone FitzGerald was not desultory; indeed, as he said of himself, his friendships were more like loves.

It seems, indeed, a vague and drifting life, without aim or plan or resolution; yet there remain, when all is said and done, two achievements for which we may bless the name and memory of FitzGerald, and which account for the fact that he enjoys a certain quality of personal renown which men of far ampler performance and greater genius do not contrive to attain. 'Fame is love disguised,' says Shelley; it is not always so, but it is so in the case of FitzGerald. What we value, after all, in an author, in a man, is personality. It need not necessarily be a very lofty or commanding personality. Stately and dignified presences often move across the stage of letters, and leave us unmoved except by a sort of chilly admiration. But the personality that is to arrest must be salient; it must have flavour and charm. We need not desire to imitate it; we may even view it critically and compassionately, but for all that it wins us by its very weakness, where strength would merely impress.

FitzGerald reveals himself at his best in his letters; from these the eccentricity, the slipshod negligence that interweaves itself into so many of the personal reminiscences about him, slip away and leave us face to face with the real man; we look into his heart and mind, and are enabled to perceive its wistful tenderness, its fine subtlety, its delicate insight, its shrewd humour. FitzGerald was weak in his preferences, and indiscreet in his emotions; but in his letters he is artistic and restrained, and never loses his faculty of incisive judgment. Merely regarded as a work of art, the letters are among the best in the English language. In the first place they are letters, communications from one human spirit to another. FitzGerald never loses sight either of himself or his correspondent; and thus they have the supreme merit of appropriateness; they are neither treatises nor lectures. They are, in a sense, like conversation, with the inflexion and intonation of speech; yet one degree more deliberate in their calculated effects, their precise phrasing, their inimitable poise. The very mannerisms have their charm—the rounded paragraph, the capital letters so lavishly interspersed. When he wrote to Lowell in 1878, 'I don't think

letter-writing men are much worth,' he was pronouncing a just sentence upon the type of letter—the literary document—which he himself was never guilty of composing. Had it not been for the fact that FitzGerald was also the writer of Omar Khayyám, the letters would probably never have seen the light; and yet I am not sure that, of the two, one could not more willingly forgo the Omar.

Then, too, in the Omar itself, FitzGerald, by a supreme felicity, found exactly the right subject for his pen. The strength and the weakness of Omar are the strength and weakness of FitzGerald. It was the same outlook upon the world, the same poignant consciousness, side by side, of the power of beauty and its evanescence. 'I think,' he wrote to a friend, sending him a copy of the book, 'you will feel a sort of *triste plaisir* in it, as others beside myself have felt. It is a desperate sort of thing, unfortunately at the bottom of all thinking men's minds; but made Music of.' Beside that deft and beautiful summary of the poem all analysis seems harsh and crude. The truth is that FitzGerald saw and faced the nameless fear that lies behind all activity and vitality, and enriched with sweet and solemn harmonies a subject suggested rather than presented by the old Persian poet. It is the unplumbed abyss, the unanswered riddle, the mysterious secret of the world that is here touched into life by the magic of art.

FitzGerald was neither hero nor saint; but it may be that the pilgrim who knows and does not excuse his own weakness stands higher at the last than Greatheart and Faithful, with all their confident courage and instinctive austerity. But whatever may be the dark answer, we may find leisure to love and not be ashamed of loving one who was simple, generous, and childlike, with a passionate devotion to nature and humanity alike, and who made no secret of either his sorrow or his love.

ARTHUR C. BENSON.

PRISCILLA OF THE GOOD INTENT.¹

A ROMANCE OF THE GREY FELLS.

BY HALLIWELL SUTCLIFFE.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LONG WATCH.

At ten of the next morning Widow Mathewson crept down the stairway at Ghyll Farm. Gaunt had snatched what sleep he could on the settle in the living-room.

'You're needed, Reuben,' she said, touching him on the shoulder.

He was on his feet at once; and to the widow it was restful to find a man who answered so quickly to the call of need.

'Well?' he asked, rubbing his eyes.

'She's all but gone—I thought, like, ye might care——'

He went up the stair, and she followed him. Gaunt, in days past, had needed the whip across his back; he found it now. There was no lifting of Peggy's eyes to his, no word to bridge the passage. He took her hands in his, but they were dumb. There was a stifled breath, as of one who seeks for air in an overcrowded room, and that was all. Peggy o' Mathewson's had gone out along the black, hot fever-road.

The widow looked at Gaunt, and pushed him gently from the room. 'Poor lad,' was all she said. 'Tis one more trouble added to the peck for me—but ye're not used to it.'

Gaunt went out through the porch, and across to the gate of the croft, and stood there leaning over the top bar, just as Peggy had done when she said good-bye to him. A great stillness lay over the lands; there was no movement of bird, or sheep, or cattle; no breeze stirred, and the sun, stark in the everlasting blue, seemed the one unwearied thing in Nature.

A stillness lay, too, upon Reuben Gaunt. He was groping

¹ Copyright, 1909, by Halliwell Sutcliffe, in the United States of America.

toward the future. A few days since Peggy had kissed him at the gate here, had bidden him return as quickly as he could. After that was silence. Though he had seen her, watched beside her bed, no word had passed between them. Not a sign of recognition had come to soften the blow. He could only recall the girl's vigour, her glowing health, and contrast them with what lay behind him at the farm.

Gradually the numbness left him, and the first, sharp sense of grief intruded. He dwelt unduly on the ugliness and horror of Peggy's death, as though they mattered now that the soul had passed. He thought, in a vague, haphazard fashion, of many ways in which he might have dealt better with her. He had a senseless longing to take back that day at Linsall Fair, when he had tempted her to meet the fever. They might have chosen twenty other roads than that to Linsall. Mrs. Mathewson, with her creed that was old and pagan as the moor itself, would have told him that he was not to blame in this—that the road to Linsall Fair was planned out before ever Peggy lay in her cradle.

Gaunt had known pain of body, but this anguish that grew keener every moment was new to him. He had no knowledge of the way to meet it, and such ignorance makes all men cowardly.

He had lost all sense of time until a glance at the sun showed that it was lying over Dingle Nook. He had spent two hours here at the gate, it seemed. Again he blamed himself, and thought of Widow Mathewson and went back to the farm.

She met him at the door. 'Twas kind o' ye, Reuben, to leave me to my work; but, then, ye're always kind these days.'

'Thought I had left ye in the lurch, mother.'

'Nay! There was summat to be done, and ye'd have been i' the way.'

They looked at each other, the man who suffered and the woman who had suffered much. On their faces was that light, steady quiet and full of a wonder, which touches those who have just stood near to death.

'Have you been—?' he began, with quick intuition, and could not put his question into words.

'Ay, getting th' poor lass ready.' The widow's lips trembled. She reached out for Gaunt's hands impulsively. 'I should have been readying her for her wedding instead, Reuben! Oh, my lad, 'tis a queer make o' business, this o' living and dying—but 'specially the living.'

Gaunt knew that he was needed, and answered the call. 'There, mother, you're not left alone.'

The words were few, but the tone of them gave new strength to Mrs. Mathewson. 'Ye can call me mother often—never too often—it's only fro' your lips I shall iver hear the name again.'

Throughout the watch these two had shared, no moment had been so full of unexpected tenderness. The widow was leaning on Reuben as on a trusted son, and he was standing to her—not in promise, but in deed—as a stay-by in her latter years. The grip of his hands helped her to face what had to come; the steady ring of his voice relieved a solitude whose silence might otherwise have broken down her spirit.

'I must get word down to the coffiner at Garth,' said Reuben, knowing how the thought of work to be done would steady Mrs. Mathewson. 'I'll look for a farm-lad to pass up the fields, and shout to him.'

'Nay, but ye willun't! I've planned it all out i' my mind these last two hours. Nathan, the coffiner, wouldn't come within a mile o' Ghyll; I know Nathan, an' he's frightened o' smaller things nor fever. See ye, Reuben! She was always full o' fancies, an' often she used to say to me, sitting beside the hearth o' nights, "Mother," she'd say, "if ever I happen to die, I'd like to be buried clean i' the peat, not down i' a wet churchyard." She'd lived lonely, ye see, like myseln, an' I fancy she's no liking for many neighbours even i' th' kirkyard.'

Reuben was ill-at-ease. He had made no pretence of godliness in years past, but at such a time as this old memories revived.

'Mother, you'd have the parson—you'll laugh at me, may be—but surely you'd have the parson say a prayer above her?'

Widow Mathewson had always been fearless in her outlook, whether it was true or false, and she did not yield. 'I don't laugh at ye, lad, but such softnesses were never meant for Peggy and me. 'Tis all varry weel i' the tamer lands—but not up here. She lived as she lived, an' she died as she died, and naught alters that. God rest her soul, say I; but that's as she made her bed i' this life. Reuben,' she went on, abandoning all her hardness again, 'I've done a deal o' thinking about religion i' my time, an' never come much nearer aught. Ye might tell me that Peggy did as weel i' this life as could be expected of a body? Now, there, I'm growing old, or I'd not give way to whimsies. Reach down my pipe for me,

Reuben ; 'baccy allus helps me to get right-sides-up wi' the world again.'

Gaunt, the ne'er-do-well, felt an odd thrill of comfort in ministering to this hard-featured woman who depended on him. He filled her pipe for her, and he lit a spill at the fire.

'That's better,' she said, drawing long puffs of smoke. 'There's a deal to be done, and there never was use i' blinking work. For myseln, it matters naught either way ; but for ye, Reuben—well, 'tis best to get fever out of a house as quick as may be. It wouldn't help a living soul if silly Nathan stepped up and caught the fever—or if parson came—and he's one o' the few i' Garth who would. Parson is staunch, for all he thinks me heathenish. Ye've faced a good deal, Reuben—surely ye'll help me to keep fever out o' Garth ?'

Gaunt moved uneasily about the room. He would have had another kind of burial, but there was no gainsaying the other's wisdom. The village, so far, had escaped contagion ; his own feelings must stand aside, surely, when measured by the terrible price which Garth might have to pay for them.

'We have no right to do aught else,' he said, turning to meet the widow's glance. 'See, mother, she always had a liking for the spot where the rowan hangs over the stream. I've been thinking she might wish to be laid there.'

The widow nodded. 'Get to your work, Reuben,' was all she said. 'It doesn't do to sit idle at such-like times.'

Something near to peace came to Gaunt when he reached the little ghyll and stood watching the stream, all but dry now, trickle down the rocky slope under the rowan. It seemed that, after all, Peggy would sleep more soundly in her own homeland here than in another place.

The peat lay soft and deep almost down to the edge of the streamway, and there was little trouble in the digging. With a touch of that fugitive poetry which was part of the man he conquered his horror of the work. He told himself that she would like to have the stream-song close beside her, day and night. Death would not be a sleep and a forgetting, but a sleep that remembered all the pleasant moorland haunts. And the rowan leaves would shelter her from heat in summer and in winter-time the peat would lie between Peggy and the wildest storms that blew.

Fancies crowded round Reuben as he worked in the pitiless heat. It was well that they came to his relief, for stauncher men

than he might have yielded without shame to the misery of the task.

He looked up at last and dashed the sweat from his eyes. The grave was ready. The heat-waves running from end to end of the open moor danced giddily before him; he felt the body sickness which had caught him at the end of the fell-race—the race which had ended with an over-moor walk home and a halt under the rowan here, while Peggy and he talked of their coming marriage.

When he recovered and could see the moor again in proper outline, he saw Billy the Fool standing on the spur of rising ground behind. Billy's face showed no trace of feeling; he stood motionless as some stone landmark reared to guide travellers across the heath.

'Digging a grave, Mr. Gaunt?' he said quietly.

Reuben was too deep in sorrow to be startled. He had not known there was a looker-on while he worked, and Billy was the last of all Garth folk he would have wished to see just now; but it mattered little.

'Yes, digging a grave, Billy.' His voice was tired. 'I would not come over-near if I were you, for there's fever come to Ghyll.'

'Te-he!' answered Billy gravely. 'Fever doesn't take like fools such as me. 'Tis the sensible, wise folk—such as ye, Mr. Gaunt—that it takes a fancy to.'

He was not afraid. So much was sure. But he turned and went down the moor with his easy, loping strides; and Reuben wondered for a moment, in the midst of his weariness, what Billy the Fool was doing here.

Billy could have given him no answer. He had learned of the trouble at Ghyll, and instinct had brought him up the moor to learn if it were Gaunt who was likely to die. Instinct took him, now that he had seen Reuben alive and well, down to the forge where much work of David the Smith's awaited him.

Gaunt forgot that he had come. He went heavily across the strip of moor to Ghyll, leaving his spade at the graveside.

They were strong of body, Widow Mathewson and he, and it was only a little way from the farm to the rowan-tree. When all was done and the kindly peat lay smooth above Gaunt's first dream of wedlock, a curlew came flapping down the moor, and paused above the rowan-tree, and wheeled about it in wide circles. Sometimes it drew nearer and sometimes it roamed wide; but it did not leave them, and its wail was piteous.

The widow's face was drawn and lined, as Gaunt's was, but she held herself bravely, and her voice was quiet.

'Happen the curlew's her parson, Reuben. Would she be happier, think ye, down yonder i' Garth kirkyard ?'

'Tis strange, mother. I've heard few birds call since I came to Ghyll, and now——'

'Strange ? There's naught stranger than life, Reuben—than life, and what we've put to bed under th' rowan-tree. Folk get mazed wi' chatter, seems to me, down i' the valleys ; they fancy life's made up o' gossip, an' borrowing tin-kettles one fro' t' other, an' quarrelling when one here an' there has burned th' bottom through.'

The curlew drew nearer to them, wheeled above their head. Its cry was Ishmael's, and the under-note of it was loneliness.

'Yond's Peggy's mate,' said the widow. 'She was allus a wild bird, she, and she never would have settled down at Marshlands. Reuben, lad, cannot ye comfort yourself wi' that thought ?'

He smiled gravely. 'Had I no wildness, then ?' he asked. 'That used to be your trouble, surely, in the old days.'

'Ay, but 'twas a different sort o' wildness. See yond curlew. 'Twill go down to th' lowlands to feed, Reuben, an' to have a frolic like—but tell it that it's got to bide there for life, and 'twould die o' home-sickness. Oh, it's hard to say it—an' harder to believe it just yet—but may be all's for th' best.'

She turned for a last look at the grave ; then, with a firmer tread than Gaunt's, she moved down the moor. As they reached the croft they saw a burly horseman unfastening the gate with his crop.

'Nay, doctor, if ye please !' cried the widow, lifting a warning hand.

'Oh, I know you've fever in the house,' he said impatiently. 'That's why I came. I only heard of it an hour since, as I passed through Garth. How's the patient ?'

'Past your caring for—but thank ye all th' same, doctor.'

'Oh, bless me—Peggy dead ? I can't believe it. Mrs. Mathewson, I wish to God I'd heard the news sooner. I might have saved her.'

'I fancy not. She niver had th' look o' one as war going to mend, an' I've seen many a case i' my time. Now, doctor, turn about. There's th' rest o' the dale to think of, an' ye'll not better aught by seeking risks.'

She told him of the burial, of Reuben's help, of their resolve to save Garth, so far as their own endurance went, from the scourge that lay so close about it. She spoke of these matters as if such usual tasks as cattle-milking or taking corn to the poultry yard; there was no sense of heroism behind her quiet statements of the facts.

The doctor ceased fumbling with the rusty gate-catch. 'I always thought you had sense enough for three, and now I know it. Of course, I should be a fool—a bit of a knave, too—to go in when there's nothing to be done.'

Widow Mathewson could not restrain the pride—grim enough, but clean and honest—which had given her strength to meet the years of trouble. There was no malice in her tone, no unfriendliness. 'They allus said i' Garth that we kept ourselves to ourselves up here. Well, we did while we were i' health, doctor—tell them we'll do no less, now we're i' trouble.'

The doctor nodded, gave a quick, inquiring glance at Reuben from under his shaggy eyebrows, and rode forward along the ridge of the moor.

'I must notify the death for them,' he thought, as he jogged along. 'They'll never think of the need for it, so I must. Well, I've not seen the lass, and it will be irregular, to be sure—but Lord knows they ask few questions when it's a fever case. Soonest hidden away out of sight, the better folk are pleased these days.'

Then he fell to thinking of Reuben Gaunt. Mrs. Mathewson had made it plain that Reuben entered the farm with knowledge of the danger, and that he chose to stay rather than leave her friendless. The doctor, during his years of rough intercourse with many people, had found less courage in the face of death than he cared to admit; he himself was as hardened against fear as he was against exposure and fatigue, and he grew impatient when weaker men showed signs of panic.

'He knew what it meant when he stepped into Ghyll,' he muttered. 'Well, well, I've been mistaken in Gaunt, it seems.'

At the end of his long day's round he was riding slowly down the village—his stout nag as wearied with the heat as himself—when he met Cilla of the Good Intent, and reined up.

'You're the only cool thing I've seen to-day,' he declared, with bluff gallantry. 'Bless me, Cilla, how d'ye contrive it? I was never one to flatter, but you put me in mind of a spring flower

peeping out of a hedgerow. It is not spring, child, and primroses are over for this year, and the heat, I tell you, is appalling.'

He wagged his head fiercely, but Cilla only laughed; and the laugh was cool and dainty as her person. Then suddenly her face clouded.

'We ought not to be jesting, doctor. Indeed, we ought not. I cannot keep my thoughts away from those poor folk up at Ghyll.'

The doctor halted, irresolute for once. He knew more of the history of the countryside than even Dick the Driver did, and now he remembered many rumours, earlier in the year, that Gaunt would carry off Priscilla after all the rest of Garth had failed. He had been sorry to hear the news then; but his feeling had changed since morning.

'Best tell you at once,' he said, 'for you're bound to hear it soon or late. Peggy o' Mathewson's died this morning.'

He regretted his impulsiveness when he saw Cilla move unsteadily across the road, and rest her hand on his saddle as if she could not stand without support. He should have let another break the news that Gaunt was free, so he told himself.

Cilla's pride was of a different texture from Widow Mathewson's, but it was as strong in its own way, and it did not fail her when need came. She was pale, and her eyes were over-bright, but she stood upright again and looked the doctor in the face.

'Tell me,' she said, 'did Mr. Gaunt go there—and did he stay in the house—of his own free will?'

'What else should have kept him, lassie? I had all the tale from Mrs. Mathewson, and I tell you she's lucky to have such a man about her. Pride may be fine enough, Cilla, but not when you're alone in a house, with one death to cry over and another—your own—to look forward to.'

Cilla's face clouded again. 'Is—is the risk so great as they would have us believe?'

'Well, may be not—there's always hope—always hope, Cilla. And there are two of them to keep the boggarts away.'

Yet Cilla knew that the old doctor took a grave view of the matter; his praise of Gaunt, praise such as he rarely gave, was proof that he thought Reuben guilty of foolhardiness. All Garth would learn now that its judgment of Gaunt had been wrong; but there would be little use in that, if he died in proving it.

Then suddenly she thought of Peggy, and pity drove away her selfishness. She recalled the fine, careless swing of the gypsy

figure as 'Mathewson's lass' had passed her on the moors or going to market. There seemed something harsh, uncalled-for, in the passing of so brave a soul. And it was *she* who had persuaded Reuben to be true to a promise earlier than *she* could claim in those near, yet far-off days of spring.

Priscilla returned tired out to Good Intent. The world of Garth might be small, but the girl's heart was big as the limits of human compassion and human searching after happiness. The two instincts were so mingled since hearing the doctor's news that Cilla could not disentangle them.

'Come ye now in,' said her father, who was smoking the after-work pipe of evening which was the sweetest of the day to him. 'Ye're looking bothered, like. It all comes o' gadding about i' this heat over-much. Grown men can bear it, but not lile hazel-saplings such as ye.'

Cilla only smiled and went up to her own room. She could not bear to talk just now even with Yeoman Hirst, the best of all her friends.

'Let a maid alone when she wears that look,' Hirst muttered sagely. 'I was never much of a hand at tackling whimsies. I'd liefer have a thorn-hedge any day.'

The doctor, meanwhile, had passed down Garth street. He was thinking mainly of the good meal and the ease that he had earned, and he frowned as he saw Widow Lister watering her strip of garden front. He knew the little woman by heart, and indeed reined up almost before she had darted into the roadway.

'Oh, doctor, I've been trying to catch you these two days back,' she said.

'Well? D'ye want to consult me? Shouldn't say much ailed you by the plump look o' your cheeks.'

The widow simpered a little, and cast down her eyes. 'Tisn't what ails me, doctor, 'tis what might ail me.'

'Now, now!' The other was impatient, but like all men he was weak in face of the little body's helplessness. 'I'll be getting home, Mrs. Lister. What *might* ail you, only heaven in its wisdom knows. Let me get supper and an hour's smoke until the ailment reaches you; then call me in. I've had nothing since a bite of bread and cheese at noon.'

'Ay, but 'tis th' fever; ye munnot jest about it. Bide a wee while, doctor. A few minutes more will mak' lile difference to ye.'

'Won't they?' growled the doctor to himself. 'It's just

those odd wasted minutes at the day's end, little fool, that break a man up, come to reckon the total at a year's end.'

But he waited with some show of patience and listened to this woman who had scarcely had an ache, or done a hard day's work, in all her life.

'Tis this way, ye see, doctor. I'm not like folk who have cheerful company about me all my time. When I sit by my lone self o' nights I've allus the dread o' fever for company, and I take it to my lone bed wi' me. What I want to know is this—suppose I passed a tramping man i' the road, as I did awhile since, an' suppose he looked as if he was sickening like, an' suppose—'

The doctor cut her short. 'Now I catch your drift. You want to know how long 'twill be before the mulberry spots come out?' he said with a cheerfulness that shocked Widow Lister. 'Something between a week and a fortnight—but I shouldn't be troubled, widow. Fever doesn't take the plump little women—it has over much respect for them.'

'Is that truth, doctor?'

'Ay, as true as that I'm due home for supper. Good-night to you. She'll have another worrit before to-morrow's ended,' he added as he jogged down the street. 'There's a use for the widow, of course—there's a use for everything created—but it puzzles a man at times to find out what 'tis.'

At Ghyll the sleepy dusk had settled into slumber. The day had been tired with its own heat, and the night was wearier still. Gaunt had stretched himself on the lang-settle, after seeing the widow go up to bed. He slept with that death in life which comes from sheer exhaustion, and did not hear Mrs. Mathewson creep like a thief down her own stair, did not know that the sneek of the door was lifted quietly.

The widow passed up through the croft and into the moor. The new moon, a sickle of silver-grey, lay over the rowan-tree. Mrs. Mathewson, from old habit, curtsied to it seven times, not knowing that she did so. Then she sought the ghyll, and the stream that was too little and too dry to be heard at all if the faintest breeze had stirred about the heath.

Gaunt had wondered at the widow's strength throughout the day. It was well that he did not see her in her weakness now. All restraint was gone as she knelt by the grave that was not a day old as yet.

'Peggy, my lass! Peggy, ye're all I have i' this world.

Reuben's staunch, I know, an' I'm fond o' the lad—but 'tis ye I want—'tis ye !'

The weakness of the strong, when at last they are compelled to yield to it, takes its own revenge. Mrs. Mathewson was bewildered, helpless. Then a blind fury seized her and she cried out on God because he had robbed her, who had so little, of the one thing she prized. And then there came a darkness, a reaching out for help, such as Gaunt had known not long ago at the gate of the croft.

After that a counterfeit of peace stole over her. She was on the borderland between this world and another, and she seemed to reach across and take the girl's hands in her own.

'Ye've strayed, lile lass. Come away back wi' me to Ghyll,' she said, grasping the new hope. 'Ah, now, ye'd come—surely ye'd come if your hard old mother asked ye.'

Throughout the night she lay beside the grave, sleeping fitfully at times, but oftener lying awake, listening to the trickle of the stream and watching the Milky Way that streaked the sky with jewelled dust. For those few hours she had let weakness have its way with her ; but, when the pink fingers of the dawn began to touch the hills, she rose. Old habit taught her that the day was meant for work. She was dizzy ; her limbs trembled under her ; grief had left her stricken in soul and body. She must conquer the trouble, that was all, as she had done at many a long-past dawn.

There had been no freshness, no movement of the breeze, through the night hours ; but now the moor seemed to breathe at last, as a little wind got up and played bo-peep among the heather. Not the fingers only, but the broad hands of the dawn were on the hills. The pink lights had deepened into crimson, and stretched like beacon fires across the eastern moor. The grey darkness receded from the dingles. Out to the west a sky of tenderest sapphire brushed the rough edges of the heath.

Widow Mathewson—again from habit—halted to look at the glory of her homeland. She scarcely knew that the well-known pageant was spread out before her ; but she gathered heart again and went bravely down to Ghyll. She walked with a man's stride, a man's straight back, and none would have guessed that she was a broken woman, asking no more than to keep her pride until the end.

Gaunt, too, was astir soon after dawn. He stepped out on tiptoe, glad that the widow slept so long, and fearing to awaken her. They met in the mistal-yard.

'Why, mother, I fancied you were sleeping,' said Reuben.

'Fancies are well enough for night time, Reuben, but they don't last long after dawn. I stretched i' my sleep, I did, an' I saw th' light twinkling on the panes, an' I bethought me like that th' farm work needed looking to. So I stepped down an' out.'

'You might have waked me.'

'Nay, ye were sleeping over sound. Mathewson was niver much of a man, but even he was snappish when I wakened him from his sleep.'

It was in this way that she chose to meet the future. There would be no more stolen vigils under the rowan-tree, no undermining of her courage. With a sudden gust of feeling she understood that Gaunt was the only living hope she had to rest upon—and there was danger to him.

'Reuben,' she said gravely, 'th' long watch has begun. The days will seem long i' passing afore we know we're safe.'

'We'll weather them, never fear. Best not think of to-morrow at all, but get on with our work.'

The widow glanced at him with keen scrutiny. 'There's a deal o' sense hidden somewhere about ye, Reuben. Seems ye've been feared to let it peep out till now.'

CHAPTER XXI.

RAIN.

NEITHER Gaunt nor Widow Mathewson was prepared for the quiet and temperate beauty that crept into their waiting-time at Ghyll. The fever, like offal dug round the roots of a sturdy plant, seemed to bring finer and more sweet-smelling flowers to blossom in the last result. Its ugliness, its power to bring loathing and misery to these two at Ghyll, were instruments of a soul-refining fragrant as the breath of wild thyme on the moors.

If Gaunt had neglected his farming work in old days it was through idleness, not from lack of knowledge. Acquaintance with all details of field and stable and mistal had been bred in him, and the widow watched him go about the usual round of work with growing wonder.

'A hired man would have done half as much i' the day, and done it badly,' she said, finding him milking the cows one evening.

'Oh, 'tis only the old proverb, mother—the master-man always

works the better if he has the will. 'Tis not often that he has the will, ye see.'

She watched him persuade the last of the cows to be friendly with the milking-pail, listened awhile to the pleasant splash-splash of the milk. 'Reuben,' she said, with a touch of jealousy, 'yond's the sauciest beast o' them all, and ye seem to have her at a word. She wouldn't let any but me milk her—not even Peggy, though she'd deft hands at the udders. And, Reuben, ye're doing too much. Leave some bit o' work for me to do lest I get thinking o' what's past and done with.'

'We'll share and share alike,' said Gaunt, looking over his shoulder from his seat on the milking-stool.

'Some folk have queer notions o' sharing. I tell ye I've not been so idle o' my hands sin' I war a girl.'

'All the better, mother. You've earned a rest by this time, while I—well, perhaps I've earned a spell of work,' he broke off with something of the widow's own grim humour.

The busy needs of the farm were already helping these two to forget their burden. To Gaunt it seemed strange, profane almost, that sorrow for the dead should give place to workaday anxieties; to the widow, who was older in experience, it was plain that such work brought with it the gift of healing.

All the routine at Ghyll was interrupted. It had thriven on its trade in milk, and cheese, and butter. Now Widow Mathewson, and Gaunt, and the three pigs fattening in the sty at the far side of the mistal were left to drink what they could of milk that once had supplied half Garth's needs; the rest, save what was needed for their own week's butter-making, had to be poured out into the parched and thirsty croft.

'It seems a waste,' said Gaunt to-night, after they had filled the bowl in the dairy, and fed the pigs, and now stood watching the rest of the milk run down the croft in a narrow stream.

'That's the good farmer cropping out again in ye, Reuben. Of course 'tis wasteful—but there's a deal of waste i' life, as I've found it. 'Tis one o' the things we hev to put up with, like. Was never good at a riddle, I; parson down yonder, may be, could tell us why bairns are crying out i' Garth for this milk we're spilling—milk their mothers willun't fetch or send for, though I'd no way risk letting them have it if they came.'

Reuben watched the streamlet die down, a dirty white across the sun-scorched brown of the grass. Then he linked his arm in

hers and drew her toward the farm, and set her down in the hooded chair by the hearth, while he found her pipe for her.

'Good sakes !' said the widow softly. 'To be waited on at my time o' life—and by ye of all men, Reuben !'

'That's the queerness of things again,' he answered, lighting his own pipe.

In other days there had been between them the silence of would-be enmity ; now there was that lack of speech which friends use when they wish to talk together. Once Gaunt stirred the peats with his foot, and glanced at the widow's face when the fire-glow lit it.

'Seeking for signs o' fever, Reuben ?' she asked drily, turning her sharp, old eyes to his.

'Well, yes, I was, as you've caught me at it. I should miss you if—if aught happened, mother.'

'Naught happens to me, Reuben, lad, save wear and tear. Would ye say that again—that ye'd miss me, if I went out along Peggy's long road ?'

'There's none else to care for me, since Peggy died. I've had little care and little love i' my short life, mother—that's why they call me "running water," may be.'

Her memory went back to the days when she had been house-keeper to Reuben's father. She recalled the hard-riding, hard-drinking master who had reared his son to the like gospel. She remembered the night when Billy the Fool was brought to Marshlands, and was afterwards turned out into the cold to answer for the sins of other folk. Many a bygone incident of Reuben's boyhood stole out from those corners of the mind which hide things half-forgotten. And again she told herself, as she had told Priscilla on a day of April snow, that Reuben Gaunt had his father to thank for Marshlands and the money, but for no other chance in life.

'Reuben,' she said, blowing quiet puffs of smoke across the hearth, 'have you no thought for yourself these days ? Naught matters much for me either way—but fear o' death comes natural to younger folk.'

'There's you and the farm to think of, mother. That's enough to carry me forward.'

Then he led her on to talk of olden times, for he had learned already that it was her surest road to peace. He mixed her rum and milk, and set it down on the ledge at the right-hand of the

hooded chair, and coaxed a smile from her and a crisp assurance that 'living wi' ne'er-do-weels was sure to bring ye into loosish ways.' She talked of Peggy's childhood, recounted a score of escapades, with a mother's pitiful and tender regard for detail. She spoke of her husband, and laughed sily at his weaknesses. It is in this way that bereaved folk find shelter sometimes, for their little hour, from the bleak face of death.

'Mathewson war as he war made,' she finished, 'an' I munnot say aught agen them as has gone—but he war shammocky, Reuben. If it war no bigger job than sticking a row o' peas, he was shammocky still. He'd start th' job after breakfast, and put in happen a dozen sticks; then he'd sit on th' wall, an' light his pipe, an' look at what he'd done till I came out, an' flicked him off o' th' wall-top; and somewhere about nightfall, if I war lucky and could get fro' my work often enough to stir him up, he'd have finished yond row o' peas. Then he'd step indoors, an' draw hissels a mug of ale, an' say he'd allus known there was naught like good, honest work for making a body enjoy his sup o' beer. Poor Mathewson! He war as he war made, an' he niver varied mich. Now, Peggy was a different breed—'

And Gaunt listened to her praise of Peggy, putting in a word here, or a question there, till it was bedtime. The widow rose at last, and took a rush-candle from the mantel.

'Well, we'd best be getting to sleep, Reuben. Ye'll lig on th' settle as on other nights? I've had many a watch-dog i' my time, lad, but ye're th' best o' the lot, I fancy. I like as I sleep sounder when I know that you're below-stairs.'

There was affection in the glance she gave him; and Reuben, when he lay down to sleep an hour later, found no ill-dreams to trouble him.

Yet these two had not been open one with the other. The widow had concealed her visit to the grave three nights ago. Gaunt had concealed the dread that beset him through the daytime.

The dread awoke with him the next morning, and dogged his footsteps as he went across the croft. It kept close beside him until noon, when he came home across the burned-up fields in search of dinner. He had known no fear until Peggy died. There had been the hope that she would recover, the need of constant listening for a call to the bedside. Hope and the urgent need were gone, and life for its own sake was sweet again to Gaunt. Fever

and the all but certain death, had grown to the shape of Barguest, the brown dog.

He halted now at the gate where Peggy had kissed him for the last time. He looked at the sun, set high in a sky of blue that had no soul behind it—a sky as hard as beaten metal, that seemed to press upon the earth and keep in the suffocating heat. If ever a man prayed for rain, Gaunt prayed for it now with a whole heart. He sought for one wisp of cloud to break the fierce monotony of blue: there was none. Each undulation of the hill-tops showed strangely clear, as if cut by a keen-edged knife. The silence was unbearable.

Gaunt's courage, when he chose to enter Ghyll and share its dangers, was child's play to the pluck that now was asked of him. There was no longer any warmth of impulse, no zest in sacrifice for its own fine sake; fear had reached him, and the shelterless heat weakened every effort at resistance, till there were times when dread merged into outright panic and set him trembling like a child. He would recover, win back his manhood with the dogged perseverance that had won him the fell-race; then, and not before, he would seek out the widow, and day by day she found him stronger, more considerate, more bent on naming her 'mother,' and on proving himself a real son.

This morning, as he leaned over the gate and searched for rain clouds, he went through one of these battles of despair. When it was nearly ended, and the colour was returning to his face, the doctor's big fiddle-headed nag came up the slope, and Gaunt started when the rider's voice broke the silence.

'What news, Mr. Gaunt?' he asked, reining in and giving Reuben a quick, professional glance.

'No news,' Gaunt answered, with a touch of dry humour. 'We're penned like birds in a cage, doctor, and have nothing to listen to, save this cursed silence. If you could give us a promise of rain, now——'

'Well, I can help you there,' put in the other briskly. 'I ought to have learned something from the weather by this time, for I've been plagued enough by it. The hot spell is nearly done with, and now you may call me a fool for prophesying in face of such a sky as that.'

It was curious to see how eagerly Reuben caught at the hope. This conspiracy of sun and stark, blue sky against him had grown

to be in sober fact a menace ; a few more days of the strain, and fear might give an easy inroad to the fever.

'There's not a sign of it,' he said, anxious to have his words disproved.

'Wait till you have had twenty years more of this queer climate, Mr. Gaunt, and then you may be just beginning to know it. I've seen a dozen little signs of rain as I came up the moor, but I trust more to what Old Lamach of High Farm calls a feeling in his bones.'

Gaunt remembered the doctor's reputation as a weather-seer. 'I hope to God you're in the right, doctor.'

'Of course I'm in the right ! 'Tis a habit of mine ; only a fool puts himself in the wrong. I'm right, too—under Providence, of course, under Providence, d'ye understand—in saying that you and the widow will win through. Tough, both of you—not cowards—plenty of fresh air inside your bodies ; oh, ye'll weather it. Well, good-day, Mr. Gaunt ; I've a long round before me.'

Gaunt would not let him go just yet. It was a relief to exchange any sort of talk with another man. 'We've noticed that you ride past the gate once every day, doctor, since you knew fever had come.'

'Well, what of that ?' said the other testily.

'Only that 'tis kindly of you. We're a bit lonesome, I own, though we make the best of it.'

'Never heard such nonsense ! Doctoring is my trade, Mr. Gaunt, not riding up and down the country doing good works. I leave those—and the credit of 'em—to the parson. I'm no poacher ; I've a bothersome case two miles further on, and this is my shortest cut.'

Gaunt knew that there was no short cut in this direction, except to the empty moor. He knew that the doctor lengthened his round each day to halt for a word at the gate, and to learn if his services were needed. 'Which farm are you bound for, then ?' he asked, with gentle banter.

'Which farm ? Good-day, Mr. Gaunt, good-day. I'm too busy a man to answer idle questions.'

Gaunt went slowly up to the house, feeling more at peace with this world of heat and toil and martyrdom. The doctor's boast had not been idly made, for instinct was apt to lead him right. He had been right in thinking that they needed physic here at Ghyll. It was no physic carried in his pocket, to be taken three times

a day and put on the shelf after a dose or two had been swallowed ; it was the medicine carried by all men who have faced life in the open, that of forward hope, and a call to look up to the hill-tops rather than down to the misty valleys.

'The doctor has ridden by again,' said Reuben, as he stepped into the living-room to find dinner waiting for him. 'I had a talk with him.'

'Ay, 'tis his way,' answered the widow. 'If aught happens, like, to ye or me, he'll not ride by. He'll walk in, Reuben, same as ye did when Peggy war ta'en wi' th' fever. Men are terrible folk for pranks, an' so I allus said. Now, ye'll sit down, an' eat what I set before ye. A roast o' mutton, Reuben, done to a turn. It's fool's policy to keep your body under-fed at these times.'

Of all the details that hampered Widow Mathewson and Gaunt none pressed on them more heavily than this need to sit at meat together. The reek of the hot joint, the loss of appetite engendered by the long, persistent drought, made such a meal seem loathsome. Each ate for the other's sake, and may be the meat, for that reason, helped them to go forward.

'Niver smoked so mich i' my life,' said the widow, reaching up for her pipe after dinner. 'I've no knowledge o' the lad that first brought baccy into Garth, but he did a service to us weak, human folk. Fill up your mug, Reuben, and come and sit i' th' front o' th' fire, an' talk to a body, like. I'm fair clemmed wi' weariness.'

At dusk of the same day the doctor finished his round and rode into Garth. It happened, as it had happened for three days past, that Priscilla was loitering in the roadway fronting Good Intent ; it was not a habit of hers, and the doctor guessed her motive, and responded to it with the quiet, charitable humour that marked all his dealings with the dalesfolk.

'I'm in rare good-humour, Miss Cilla,' he said, drawing rein. 'D'ye see those bits of fleecy clouds coming up across the moon ?'

'I had not looked at the sky,' she answered absently. 'It is ever the same these days, and one grows tired of it.'

'Ay, but 'twill not be the same when you wake to-morrow. I was up at Ghyll this morning—'

'Yes ?' put in Cilla, with sudden interest.

'And I pitted my weather-lore against Gaunt's. He said it couldn't rain if it tried, and I said it was bound to.'

He saw Cilla's hand go up to her heart for a moment, saw the

brightness creep into her face. He had known all along that she needed to be told that Gaunt, so far, was well, and it had pleased him to wrap up the news in this talk about the weather.

'They—they are both well at Ghyll?' she asked.

'As sound as can be. I've an interest in those two, Miss Cilla. They deserve to come through it all, and somehow I fancy that they will.'

'They say the chances are against it——'

'Oh, they say a good deal of nonsense, time and time. There's naught like pluck for winning a fight. Good-night to ye and pray that I miss Widow Lister as I ride by. Three days ago she was afraid of fever; this morning she caught me on the outward journey, and "Doctor," she said, "I've caught a chill that may well bring me to my grave." I laughed—as I do, Miss Cilla, in season and out—and "You're lucky," I said. "If I could find a touch o' chill under this brazen sky I'd be glad of the relief, and so would my sweating horse." Good-night again, lile Cilla. Gaunt's not going to die just yet, and I begin to think he might be worth your taking one day.'

Cilla listened to the pit-pat of hoofs as it grew faint and fainter down the dusty road. The doctor had earned his right-of-way to folk's hearts after many an uphill climb, and his power to help his neighbours was not limited to their bodies' needs. Whenever he felt that death was certain he told his patient bluntly that the next world, not this, was his concern; while there was doubt he thrust down his throat, willy-nilly, the physic of hope, and sweetened the draught, so far as he could, with some racy village jest.

'There's a good man goes down Garth street,' thought Cilla, following the other's sturdy figure as it disappeared among the shadows.

The moon lay young, slender as a sickle, over the parched lands of Garth. Cilla herself, as she stood in the roadway, looked cool and slender, too, in her white gown, though she was full of strange disquiet. Her modesty had taken fright. It was well enough to be anxious for Reuben's safety, well enough to seek news of him as often as she could; but she knew that it was more than friendship, this restless eagerness for news. And Peggy o' Mathewson's should have been a bride by now; and the peat was scarcely smoothed above her grave.

Cilla, for all her daintiness, her love of clean thinking, and clean doing, was human as her neighbours, and subject to those gusts of warm and reckless feeling which are apt to scatter the habits of a lifetime. If she had been told of another who waited, as she had done, for news of a bridegroom widowed before his wedding-day, she would have thought lightly of her. Yet she could only picture Reuben up at the lonely, hill-top farm, could only pray for his safety, and know that her prayers came from a warmer heart than she ought to carry.

She turned instinctively to Good Intent. Her father would be sitting by the hearth, big of his body, big in charity. She would step in and have a talk with him.

The yeoman was sitting in his chair, as she had pictured him; but his pipe lay cold in his hand, and he motioned her gravely to a seat in the settle-corner opposite.

'Cilla, I've had a talk or two wi' the doctor,' he began.

She waited, suppressing a quiet laugh that he, too, had gone out for stolen interviews with the lay priest of Garth.

'It seems Gaunt *chose* to go in to Ghyll Farm, and to stay there. He knew what it meant before ever he crossed the door-stone. I wouldn't believe it until the doctor told me it was so.'

'Yes, father.'

'Well, be durned if I'd have done it.'

'Oh, yes—oh, indeed, you would have done it—father, 'tis the sort of call you'd have answered, but it was not asked of you.'

'Fiddle-de-dee,' said the yeoman. 'Black Fever would always scare me. Give me a runaway horse, and I'll handle the reins, but—th' fever—'tis a waiting game, like Cilla, and I could never play such. I've a sort of envy, like, of men who can.'

Priscilla lit a spill for his pipe. She filled his glass for him and set it by his side; and then she waited.

'Seems I've treated Gaunt amiss,' said her father by and by.

'All folk do in Garth.'

'Ay, they did; but I was down i' Shepperton to-day, and they had the news, and folk were puzzled. They fancied that Gaunt was better nor like; in fact, Cilla, they seemed minded to turn face about and overdo their praising of him.'

Cilla spread her hands to the peat-glow, and her face was full of tenderness. 'I told you so i' the spring, father, but you would not listen.'

The yeoman was uneasy. Praise was due to Gaunt, and yet he distrusted the man. 'He comes of a bad breed, Cilla, and I'm farmer enough to know that ye don't rear good stock from such.'

Cilla was quiet, but eager. 'We all know his father's story—but what of his mother? Had she no say in the matter?'

'Why, yes; she was well enough, a long way too good for old Gaunt; but she died when Reuben was a bairn. She never had a chance to better his wild up-bringing.'

And then at last, after an uneasy silence, the yeoman got to the heart of the matter. His fondness for Cilla was embarrassing at times; it gave him too keen an insight into any change of mood in her, and he had guessed the secret of this restlessness which had fallen on her since the news of fever came from Ghyll.

'Lile lass,' he said, 'I've been thinking a deal to-night, and I wish more than ever that ye'd persuaded David the Smith to stay on i' Garth. Whether ye wouldn't have him, or whether his big hulking shyness stood up between the two o' ye, and wouldn't let him ask ye, 'tis not for me to say; but I'm more than ever sorry, lass, as things have turned out.'

'Why, father?' A delicate colour had crept into Cilla's face, but there was that steady light in her eyes which the yeoman feared.

'Well, Reuben is free to go wandering again——'

'No, no!' Her treason to the dead seemed baser than it had done in the silence of the road outside. This outspoken hint of it from another showed all its meanness to the girl's sensitive fancy. 'No, father! We must not talk of such—of such foolishness. Reuben may be dead before the month is out.'

'Well, yes,' said Hirst, soberly. 'May be I spoke out of season, Cilla. There, lass! Gaunt has done what I dursn't, and I'm shamed to own to it, and I'm hoping he'll come through it, as he deserves.'

So then Cilla came and sat at his knee, for the intimacy between these two was full of understanding. Her father was quick to blame himself for the few ungenerous thoughts that came his way, and she knew how hard it was for him at any time to speak well of Reuben Gaunt.

'And not only that,' she went on. 'Reuben may be this or that, father, but he has seen Peggy o' Mathewson's die, and he

has helped to bury her, so the doctor tells me, and—and, father, I think we ought to leave him with his thoughts—they'll be sad ones.'

Cilla was diffident, as a good woman is when she must run counter to a well-loved father. The yeoman looked at her for a moment, then laid down his pipe, and lifted her to the arm of his big chair.

'Seems to me I'm a child i' your hands at times, Cilla. Oh, ye're right, lile lass. There were better and bigger men than Gaunt i' Shepperton to-day, but not one o' them has done what he did, not to my knowledge.'

The sickle moon climbed up that night till it lay over Ghyll Farm, that sheltered tired folk who slept. It lay, too, over the rowan that sheltered one whose weariness was over and done with. On the moor, where the thin stream trickled down, whispering a prayer of peace to Peggy as it passed her grave, there was the keen breath of life again. First, the moon was shrouded, then clouds as grey and slight as gossamer came drifting up the breeze; and after that a little wind got up, piping thin and high like a plover tired with the long day's flight.

It was very still on the moor, save for the soft, insistent crying of the wind. A wayfarer, had he been crossing the untilled acres, might have heard God walking in this sweet and untamed wilderness. The wind, slight as it was, was full of perseverance, and it began now to shepherd running vagabonds of the mist across the heath.

At three of the morning there was neither moon nor sky to be seen. A wide sheet of mist, wet to the touch, hid every landmark of the moor which, until an hour ago, had shown plainly all its jagged hillocks, its raking, hill-top lines. And dawn, when it came, could do no more than thread the cloud-banks through with tints of silver-grey.

Gaunt, soon after daybreak, woke from his sleep on the langsettle, with instinctive knowledge that another day's glare had to be faced, and crossed to the window. At first he thought himself mistaken in the hour, so dark the room was. Then he unbarred the door and went out into the mist. He felt its fingers wet about his face and hands; he drew deep breaths of it, as men drink in the first spring warmth after a hard winter. Then he laughed,

not knowing why, and leaned against the house-wall, and was glad to rest still awhile, with this sense of peace and freedom sheltering him closely as the mist itself.

The physical relief, the sense of damp and freshness after long heat, were part only of a deeper change. His fever-dread had left him; he no longer felt the wearing need to hold his courage tightly step by step through the day's uphill climb, lest it failed him at the pinch.

'Oh, God be thanked,' he murmured, and went indoors, and called up the stone stairway, 'Mother, I've news for you!'

The widow had slept later than her wont, but she was awake in a moment. 'What is it, Reuben?' she answered, fearing disaster always when an urgent summons came.

'The blessed rain is coming. We'll have cloudy skies again.'

'Now, there's a ha'porth of nonsense to fetch a body out of her bed with,' grumbled the other. 'Tisn't dawn, Reuben, surely; winter-dark, I call it.'

'Come down and see, mother.'

She was soon at the porch-door beside him, and Gaunt, watching her face, could see the lines of strain grow softer, as if the mist had filled their hollows in with kindly fingers. They stood there, the two of them, as if they could never have too much of the grey, cool air; and the heat of the past weeks, as they looked back on it from this sanctuary, seemed like that of the burning, fiery furnace which both remembered from teachings of a far-off childhood.

There was nothing fanciful about this change of theirs from fear to strength. Bred in a country which knew more of cloudy skies than blue, they needed rain after long abstention from it; and the mist was a sure herald of grace to come.

'Tis queer how the weather has ye at a word, Reuben,' said the widow presently. 'I'm keen set for my breakfast, an' that's more nor I could say honestly for a week o' days.'

She would not have the door closed when they fried the rashers and the eggs, though the mist stole in and lay like smoke about the room.

'Now, don't ye go shutting the door against a friend,' she said, when Reuben made a movement to close it. 'I'm only too thankful, lad, to have the right smell of food i' my nostrils once again.'

Later that day—a little past noon—the mist found its proper shape, and fell in drops as quiet and as persistent as the breeze that pushed it forward. By sundown it was raining steadily and, for the first time since their watch began, these two slept without any dreams to trouble them.

When Gaunt woke late the next morning, the rain was lapping at the windows still, with a gentle, greedy patience that promised more to come.

The mist had gone when he went out into the croft, and there was a blur of sunshine through the rain. The thirsty ground sucked in the moisture, and asked for more, and still showed riven cracks as dry as the molten heaven of two days ago; and from the pastures a ground-mist rose, as thick and smoky as the reek from the smithy down at Garth where Fool Billy's fire was being coaxed into a blaze.

Out of the rain, and the under-mist that reached up above his horse's hocks, the doctor came to Ghyll.

'All well, Mr. Gaunt?' he asked, with a note of strict routine in his voice.

'Better for this God-sent weather, doctor.'

'Oh, that's your view, is it? I'm wet to the skin, and am like to be wetter before I'm done. This quiet sort of rain goes deeper than your quick-come, quick-go storms. Still, it will clear the air, may be, and you'll remember that I prophesied it, Mr. Gaunt,' he broke off, with one of his sudden glances, as if he were probing a patient with the knife; 'd'ye feel any lassitude—well, to put it plainly, d'ye feel the world is slipping from under you, like a crazy limestone wall when you try to climb it?'

'Well, no,' said Gaunt, the new hope and the fresh colour showing in his cheeks. 'I did, till the rain came; and I was as near to fright as ever I've been in my life; but that's all gone. Mrs. Mathewson has taken new heart, too.'

The doctor looked him over once more. 'I'm not here to play Providence,' he said, with an air of quiet relief. 'This horse of mine, with his fiddle-head, could never carry so heavy a burden as Providence; but I think, Mr. Gaunt, you may let me take word to Marshlands that they can begin to get ready for you—air the sheets and dust the rooms, and all the nonsense women like.'

'I shall be needed here for awhile,' said Reuben.

'That's as you please.'

The two men stood looking at each other with great friendliness, though in years past their intercourse, on the doctor's side at least, had had more than a touch of chill in it. Gaunt had not given that side of the matter a thought; yet these weeks at Ghyll had divided, like a deep gulf, the old days and the new. Whatever lightness he showed in future, his neighbours would look behind it, and would see a stricken farmstead instead and a man entering it of his own free will to succour others. The folk of Garth were slow, may be, to form new opinions of men, or crops, or weather; but in the long run they were just, and they did not forget.

The doctor read a good deal in Reuben's face just now. There was a light of happiness in it—unquestioning, childlike happiness dimmed just a little by awe and some bewilderment. He had seen the look often when one or other of his patients had lain near to death, and had lived on to watch another spring spread magic fingers over a world that now was doubly sweet to them.

'It is not so easy to die as I thought, doctor,' said Reuben, breaking the silence unexpectedly. 'You never know how fond you are of being chained to this daft world, until—well, till you begin to listen for the snapping of the chains.'

'I'd be sorry to leave it myself,' said the doctor, with his big, heathen laugh. 'They work me to death, and I've seldom an hour to call my own, and first I'm baked with sun-heat, and then I'm chilled by this mist-rain you're so fond of, till I scarce know whether I'm dead or alive; but, bless ye, Mr. Gaunt, there's some queer sort of joy in life after all. Besides,' he added, with his own grim pleasantry, 'there's a certain doubt as to what comes after.'

'There is,' murmured Gaunt, though he would have been slow to confess so much at another time. 'I fancy 'twas the doubt troubled me, when I looked up at the sky and felt the brazen heat.'

'Just my feeling!' said the other, cheerily. 'It might be hotter out beyond, or again, it might be mistier—I never liked extremes.'

Again there fell a silence between them, and still the doctor lingered for the sake of lingering, and because he knew that Gaunt was weak after long strain and needed a man's chatter in his ears.

'Undoubtedly I'm a lost soul,' he went on. 'Widow Lister told me as much last night, when she caught me riding home, and got me to poultice a boil the size of a pin-head, and then gave me a sermon because I hadn't the fear of the Lord in me. "If I'd

as much fear of the Lord, Widow, as you have of your body," I said, "they'd count me righteous in Garth."

Reuben laughed. He knew Widow Lister, and the doctor's racy tongue had brought the picture clearly to his mind. And somehow neither wished to get on with the business of the day, for each knew at last that, in their separate ways, they had faced adversity with some show of courage.

'I've a weakness for Widow Mathewson myself—I'd the same feeling for poor Peggy,' said the doctor presently. 'I begin to have the like feeling for you, Mr. Gaunt.'

'What sort of feeling, doctor?'

'Well, a "birds-of-a-feather" feeling. We're up on the moor-top, we. There's little of the heathen in me; I've seen too much of human sorrow to feel aught but fear of God. But my God's different—yours is, and the widow's is, and poor Peggy's was—and I catch a sight of Him when I think myself too weary for aught but supper and bed afterwards; when I'm riding over the moor, Mr. Gaunt, at the end of a long day's work, and the hills get up in front of my fiddle-headed horse, and the wind blows low through the heather, and I listen to the fairies. Oh, we doctor-folk learn a thing or two when we ride, with tired bodies and clear eyes, over the moor-top home to supper.'

Gaunt had not been permitted to see this side of the man before, and his surprise showed in his face, perhaps, for the doctor gathered up his reins and laughed shamefacedly.

'No, no, Mr. Gaunt,' he said in his gruffest voice, 'I'm not going to enter any ministry. Foolish thoughts *will* slip out at times. Now, you mean to stop here awhile longer? I think I'll ride home by way of Marshlands, all the same. Scared as they are, they'll be glad of my news. I shall tell that hulking hind of yours, Peter Wood, to bring you up a change of clothes and linen. It was useless before, but now you can burn all you stand up in, and put on something that doesn't carry any memory of the fever with it. You've burned all the sick-room things, by the way—bedding, and hangings, and what not?'

Gaunt nodded. 'And whitewashed every corner afterwards. Mrs. Mathewson would have it so.'

'Bless me, a couple of sensible folk seem to be living at Ghyll! All as practical and trim as if I'd had the overlooking of it myself.'

'Well, you see, doctor,' said the other with a smile that had no mirth in it, 'it was a big job we'd undertaken, and big jobs are worth doing thoroughly, once you take them up. There was no need for us to help Ghyll become a plague-spot for the whole of Garth.'

'Oh, the world's standing on her head, Mr. Gaunt! The tough old doctor suspected of leanings towards the ministry, and you preaching thoroughness. There, there, I must have my jest. There's no offence, I hope?'

With a cheery nod and a jerk of the reins the doctor was trotting up the moor, leaving the wholesome crispness of a north-west wind behind him.

At ten of the next morning Reuben heard a shout as he crossed from the mistal-yard. Peter Wood, the hind at Marshlands, stood midway up the croft. He carried a bundle in his arms, and his knees were shaking.

'I dursn't come no farther, sir—I dursn't.' The big, ungainly lad was almost blubbing as he stood, a figure of woe, in the drenching sheets of rain. 'Doctor said I'd to bring these, an' I've brought 'em, but never a stride nearer Ghyll will I come. Couldn't, sir, if I tried; my feet willun't let me.'

'Nobody asked you to. Set your bundle down, Peter, and I'll fetch it when you've taken your precious body out of harm's way. Is all right with the farm, Peter?'

'Ay, th' farm's all right, an' th' folk in it are all right so far; but—'

'Oh, knock all that nonsense out of your head, lad! You'll not take fever, if that is what's troubling you. Tell them I may be home in a week to stir you all out of your laziness—or it may be a fortnight; it depends on whether I'm needed here.'

Peter's wits were never overstrong, and terror had not sharpened them; yet even he was conscious of a new note in the master's voice—a note less easy-going than of old, and fuller of authority. The lad glanced down the croft, then up at Reuben, but still held his ground; it was plain that he wished to get as far away from Ghyll as possible, and yet that he was held by some counter-fear.

'Is't true what they say, sir,' he blurted out, 'that a body can catch the fever just by looking at another body as has been nigh it?'

'No,' said Reuben with a laugh, that heartened Peter a little, 'it's a lie. Most fears are lies, my lad, and you can tell them so from me down at Marshlands yonder.'

'Thank ye, sir,' said Peter, laying down his bundle in the wet and making off with a speed that recalled the haste of Dan Foster's lad not long ago.

When Gaunt stepped into the farm, carrying his dripping bundle, Widow Mathewson looked up from her baking-board.

'What have ye there, Reuben?'

'Clean linen, and a change of clothes. It sounds naught much, mother, but, Lord, how I need to get into them! Seems the doctor knew how I needed them, for 'twas his thought to send them up.'

The widow laid down her rolling-pin, rubbed some of the flour from her arms, then looked at Gaunt with her straight, hazel eyes. 'That means ye're ready for flitting. Well, I mustn't grumble, though I'll miss you sorely. Life's made up o' settlings in and flittings out, as the throstle said when she watched her fledged brood fly.'

'But I'm not flitting, mother, not for a week or two yet.' He was touched by the loneliness, the independence, and the pride of her appeal. 'I'm needed here, ye see, you alone in the house, and the farm-work to be seen to; and, besides, they'd be scared to death at Marshlands if I gave them no time to get used to the notion of my coming back. They'd be down with fever the next day, or think they were.'

'You're a good lad, Reuben,' she said, after a pause. 'Give me your bundle, and let me set your things to the fire. 'Twill be rheumatiz ye'll catch if ye put them on as they are.'

In the afternoon the sun got out for an hour, for the rain was tired of its own vehemence. Gaunt put the clothes, warm and with the peat-smell of the fire on them, under his arm, and went up the moor, past Peggy's grave, past the little, grey bridge where the harebells were reviving from the drought. Just above the bridge was a pool known to him of old; it had dwindled during the hot months, and the rains had not slaked its thirst, and had let only the shallowest of streamlets run off its surface to feel the larger brooks. For all that the pool was deep enough for a bath, and Gaunt stripped and plunged into the water.

The glare and misery of the past weeks seemed to yield to this gentle lapping of the peat-brown water. He had done his

work right for once in his heedless life, and knew it; and the way of Peggy's death, the squalor and the terror of it, were washed clean by the stream that sucked, and laughed, and gurgled, round the edges of the pool.

A curlew came and looked at him as he splashed in the brown water. A burn-trout finned its way up-stream, and turned in fright when it found a four-limbed monster in its favourite pool. For the rest he had no company and needed none.

(To be continued.)

ne
d
d
ne
d
l.